

Developing an Indigenous Arts Strategy for the Northern Territory: Issues paper for consultations

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ISSN 1442 3871
ISBN 0 7315 4921 X

This CAEPR Working Paper is published only on the world wide web at:
<http://www.anu.edu.au/caepr/working.php>

Foreword

This Working Paper provides early output from a consultancy undertaken by the Centre for Aboriginal Economic Policy Research (CAEPR) for the NT Government, for wide circulation. In February 2003, I was approached to assist the Department of Community Development, Sports and Cultural Affairs (DCDSCA), the Department within which Arts NT is located, to develop an Indigenous Arts Strategy. The promise to consider the desirability of such a strategy was an election commitment of the Clare Martin Government elected to office in August 2001. Subsequently, the Chief Minister, who is also Minister for the Arts, indicated that effort would be made to complete such a Strategy by August 2003. The consultancy negotiated was to begin in March 2003 and to be completed by 31 May 2003, to allow due government consideration of its findings and recommendations and for the timely development of an Indigenous Arts Strategy for the NT. Resources were provided by the NT Government to allow the engagement of Sally Ward as a graduate researcher to assist me in this work, while Arts NT also provided a project officer, Christine Colton, who facilitated many aspects of this consultancy including call for submissions and consultation forums.

This Working Paper reports what has been the first step in the development of an Indigenous Arts Strategy. It aims to do two things. First, to assess the current state of Indigenous arts in the NT. Second, to canvass issues for consideration by all arts stakeholders and to facilitate the development of an Indigenous arts support framework for the NT.

In order to encourage stakeholder input to the process, on 14 March 2003, Arts NT made a call for submissions initially from 90 arts interest groups in the NT, subsequently increased to 100. The window of opportunity to provide written submission was short, but 32 were received by early April. Simultaneously, I undertook to prepare a diagnostic Issues Paper that was both literature-based and that considered submissions, by mid-April 2003. This Issues Paper was then pre-circulated to a wide range of arts sector stakeholders and in the spirit of constructive dialogue to be discussed and debated at three forums with arts practitioner and bureaucratic stakeholders in Alice Springs and Darwin in late April and early May.

That Issues Paper has now been converted, with minor editorial and stylistic changes, to allow formatting consistency, to this CAEPR Working Paper. Following the forums, and further consultations, a Discussion Paper *An Indigenous Arts Strategy for the Northern Territory: Recommended Framework* was completed for NT Government consideration by the end of May 2003. That Discussion Paper, which draws on both the Issues Paper and extensive stakeholder consultations, was released by the NT Government alongside its Indigenous Arts Strategy in August 2003. Together with a version of this Working Paper, the NT Indigenous Arts Strategy, *Building Strong Arts Business*, and the Recommended Framework Paper are published on the DCDSCA website at <http://www.dcdsca.nt.gov.au/>.

Jon Altman
Director, CAEPR
September 2003

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Abbreviations and Acronyms

| | |
|---------|---|
| ABS | Australian Bureau of Statistics |
| ACCC | Australian Competition and Consumer Commission |
| ACISS | Arts and Crafts Industry Support Strategy |
| AFC | Australian Film Commission |
| AGPS | Australian Government Publishing Service |
| ALP | Australian Labor Party |
| AMLS | Arts, Museums and Library Services |
| ANKAAA | Association of Northern, Kimberley and Arnhem Aboriginal Artists |
| ANU | The Australian National University |
| ATSIAB | Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Arts Board |
| ATSIC | Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Commission |
| ATSIPA | Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Performing Arts |
| CAAMA | Central Australian Aboriginal Media Association |
| CAEPR | Centre for Aboriginal Economic Policy Research |
| CAS | commercial accommodation survey |
| CDEP | Community Development Employment Projects |
| CMC | Cultural Ministers Council |
| DBIRD | Department of Business, Industry and Resource Development |
| DCDSCA | Department of Community Development, Sport and Cultural Affairs |
| DCITA | Department of Communications, Information Technology and the Arts |
| DEET | Department of Employment, Education and Training |
| IAD | Institute for Aboriginal Development |
| IAS | Indigenous Arts Strategy |
| ICCP | Indigenous Community Coordination Pilots |
| ICCT | Indigenous Communities Coordination Taskforce |
| KCTWM | Key Centre for Tropical Wildlife Management |
| MAC | Maningrida Arts and Culture |
| MAGNT | Museums and Art Galleries of the Northern Territory |
| MIDI | Music Industry Development Inc |
| MIPA | Marketing Indigenous Performing Arts |
| MMSD | Mining Minerals and Sustainable Development (Project) |
| NACISS | National Arts and Crafts Industry Support Strategy |
| NATSIAA | National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Art Award |
| NT | Northern Territory |
| NTTC | Northern Territory Tourism Commission |
| RACS | Regional Arts and Culture Strategy |

Abstract

This Issues Paper is a first step in the development of an Indigenous Arts Strategy (IAS) for the Northern Territory (NT). It aims to do two things. First, to assess the current state of Indigenous arts in the NT. Second, to canvass issues for consideration by arts stakeholders and to facilitate the development of an Indigenous arts support framework for the NT. It should be noted at the outset that the development of such an Indigenous arts strategy is unprecedented in the NT, and possibly in Australia. Strategies have been developed for the arts generally and arguably for the Indigenous visual arts industry nationally, but there has never been a comprehensive attempt to develop a strategy for Indigenous arts at the State level. To some extent it is fitting that the NT is taking the leadership role here, because not only is it the most significant Indigenous jurisdiction in terms of relative population (29% of the NT's small total population of just under 200,000 is Indigenous according to the 2001 Census) but also because Indigenous arts here, and especially the visual arts, have such high regional, national and international profiles.

This Issues Paper seeks to chart a realistic pathway to ensure Indigenous arts success under an NT Indigenous arts advocacy and support framework. The challenge for the NT Government's IAS will be to develop a positive and achievable Indigenous arts policy umbrella that is warmly welcomed by the NT arts community and the NT constituency and that is regarded as valuable by other major Commonwealth funding agencies. This suggests, on one hand, that these other Commonwealth agencies are also stakeholders in the development of the IAS—it is in the Commonwealth's interests to seek to sustain a national Indigenous arts sector, and to ensure that the important NT component is sustainable by supporting it institutionally and financially. On the other hand, while it is in the NT Government's interest to form an effective alliance with the Commonwealth because of its current financial dominance in the sector in the NT, both interests, as well as Indigenous arts stakeholders, will be well served by strong coordination.

Resolving such issues will require astute political judgments by the NT Government. The challenge for the development of the IAS is to seek to convert the undeniable current of NT Government goodwill, and broader Commonwealth concurrence (recently evident in the March 2003 CMC Communiqué), to a focus on Indigenous arts as a priority for positive policy action. How can the NT Government ensure that it enhances and maintains the national leadership in Indigenous arts, and especially visual arts, that the NT clearly enjoys? This, ultimately, must be the aim of the IAS.

Acknowledgments

In developing this Issues Paper I have been assisted enormously by Sally Ward and Chris Fondum. Flick Wright, Peter Whitehead, Ian Munro, Melinda Hinkson and an anonymous reader also all generously helped with comments on an earlier draft. Staff from Arts NT were most helpful, especially assigned officer Christine Colton. Submissions from 32 Indigenous arts stakeholders, mainly in the NT were of great importance. The ongoing dialogue with staff of the Department of Communications, Information Technology and the Arts, the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Commission and the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Arts Board of the Australia Council also assisted the development of this Issues Paper. Thanks are due to Hilary Bek for editorial assistance, and Wendy Forster for layout.

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This Issues Paper is a first step in the development of an Indigenous Arts Strategy (IAS) for the Northern Territory (NT). It aims to do two things. First, to assess the current state of Indigenous arts in the NT. Second, to canvass issues for consideration by arts stakeholders and to facilitate the development of an Indigenous arts support framework for the NT. The Terms of Reference for this exercise, as provided by Arts NT, are set out in Appendix 1.

It should be noted at the outset that the development of such an Indigenous arts strategy is unprecedented in the NT, and possibly in Australia. Strategies have been developed for the arts generally and arguably for the Indigenous visual arts industry nationally, but there has never been a comprehensive attempt to develop a strategy for Indigenous arts at the State level. To some extent it is fitting that the NT is taking the leadership role here, because not only is it the most significant Indigenous jurisdiction in terms of relative population (29% of the NT's small total population of just under 200,000 is Indigenous according to the 2001 Census) but also because Indigenous arts here, and especially the visual arts, have such high regional, national and international profiles.

The fact that such a strategy has no precedent makes its development both challenging and risky. The challenge is associated with the policy complexity of this area encompassing the arts, Indigenous affairs and Territory development. The risks are that what has worked in the past, and is still working in the present, could be jeopardised in the future by policy change. This Issues Paper adheres to the precautionary principle that support for what is working well must be maintained. This in turn raises complex issues, to be addressed below, about how new activity might be resourced.

Approach

The approach to the Centre for Aboriginal Economic Policy Research (CAEPR) to assist the NT Government (via Arts NT) to develop an IAS was negotiated in late January and February 2003, with the process to begin in mid March 2003, after the Indigenous Economic Forum in Alice Springs.

The timeframe for undertaking this exercise is tight and challenging: on one hand, it had to follow the more wide ranging review of NT arts undertaken in 2002 (Positive Solutions 2002a, 2002b). On the other hand, it had to be completed by June 2003 so that it can be considered by the NT Government in the budget context and with the Chief Minister's commitment to make a statement of intent at the start of the August 2003 Garma Festival focused on Aboriginal arts and culture.

This Issues Paper sets out to integrate with the wider NT arts development framework (Positive Solutions 2002a, 2002b), while seeking not to replicate elements of this framework. Consultations will explore whether the issues identified and the priorities suggested here are acceptable to Indigenous arts and bureaucratic stakeholders.

This approach is influenced by past research undertaken on the arts, and especially on the Indigenous visual arts industry—the following transparent summary of research and positions taken in the last five years indicates the background intellectual property and research expertise the author brings to this arts development process. Issues researched and published include:

- An analysis of the national Indigenous arts and crafts industry and its future presented at the 1999 National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Visual Arts Conference in Cairns (Altman 1999a). Two concluding observations made to this conference were that there is a need for a national strategic approach to Indigenous visual arts and a need for greater cooperation between main Commonwealth funding agencies.¹
- Analysis of the financial records of a number of Indigenous art centres in the NT (Altman 2000a) observed that, despite a lack of business planning, these art centres still represent very good value investment for the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander

Commission (ATSIC) under the National Arts and Crafts Industry Support Strategy (NACISS).

- A critique of the National Indigenous Arts Advocacy Association's proposed and implemented authenticity label primarily based on a perception that a national coverage could not be provided by a Sydney-based organisation, as authenticity issues need to be regionally addressed and owned by practitioners (Altman 1999b).
- A comprehensive business development plan undertaken with Maningrida Arts and Culture for the period 2000–02 (Altman 1999c) that was updated in a collaboration in 2002 for the period 2003–05.
- Participation in the ATSIC-sponsored benchmarking workshop in February 2000 where strong stakeholder endorsement was provided for formula-funding for art centres based on an agreed set of cost factors, multi-year funding, and for transparent accountability for performance (see Altman 2000b; Association of Northern, Kimberley and Arnhem Aboriginal Artists (ANKAAA) 2003; Palmer 2000).
- A research project in 2001–02 for the Australian Competition and Consumer Commission (ACCC) that included a focus on competition and consumer issues for the Indigenous visual arts industry (Altman et al. 2002). This research concluded that resourcing art centres was one means to overcome unconscionable conduct, and that education of consumers and producers on issues associated with authenticity is another.²
- I have participated on the Advisory Committee to the Statistical Working Group reporting to the Cultural Ministers Council (CMC) on the valuation of Indigenous cultural product (visual arts and hand-crafts) in Australia since 2001.

In order to encourage stakeholder input to the process, Arts NT made a call for submissions from 90 arts interest groups in the NT, subsequently increased to 100. Some submissions were received late, which was not surprising because the window of opportunity was short. Nevertheless, we received 32 submissions that are analysed in greater detail below (see also Appendix 2).

Scene setting

Since the early 1970s, the development of Indigenous visual arts and Indigenous engagement with the tourism sector in the NT have been recognised as leading the nation. There are many reasons for the relatively early and significant growth of Indigenous arts in the NT including:

- the late and, by Australian standards, relatively benign arrival of European colonisation and associated resilience of customary artistic practices;
- the passage of significant federal land rights laws in the mid 1970s and the associated maintenance and growth of Aboriginal residence 'on country' both at townships and outstations; and
- the active desire of very many Aboriginal visual artists for an engagement with the market—for economic, cultural and political reasons.³

In the last 30 years there has been a significant growth in the extent of Indigenous arts practice, facilitated by the Commonwealth utilising a community-controlled arts organisational model that numerous studies indicate is highly workable.⁴ Much of the Indigenous arts contribution has been in the visual arts, with the western desert art of central Australia and the bark paintings of Arnhem Land being iconic of Indigenous art, and indeed Australian, identity.⁵ While statistics for the arts in Australia, for Indigenous arts in Australia and, at a lower spatial scale, in the NT are all very deficient,⁶ those that exist indicate that this sector is economically, socially, culturally and politically significant and that it is sustainable, at least if a 30-year time frame is an adequate window to measure sustainability.⁷ Of great importance has been the shift in the visual arts from an audience and market perception that Indigenous art is ethnographic, to a more inclusive recognition that it is contemporary, sophisticated and dynamic fine art. Associated with

this has been a heightened profile of such art in Australia's public art institutions and associated changes in the cultural life and image of both the NT and the nation.

While the last 30 years are uncontestedly a period of efflorescence in the growth of many contemporary forms of Indigenous arts, this is not the case for Indigenous economic and social development more broadly. Indeed there are Indigenous and non-Indigenous people who depict the last 30 years (the self determination and self management policy era) as a period of failure—not a view shared by all, and certainly not a view endorsed in this paper. While the reasons for this perception are extremely complex, as are the factors determining Indigenous socioeconomic status, three issues stand out as possible explanators of this perspective. The first is historical legacy, alienation of land and property rights, and exclusion from the mainstream provisions of the state. The second, that partially contradicts the first, is land rights and the geographic location of many Aboriginal people in regions remote from the market and employment and enterprise opportunity. The last, which again partially contradicts the first, is too much welfare and the associated negative impacts of long-term welfare dependence, with welfare often undifferentiated from citizenship rights or from access to the 'work-for-the-dole' Community Development Employment Projects (CDEPs).

These are all very complex issues and this is not the place to debate either causal relationships or the validity of such perceptions. Rather, our concern is with the articulations between such broad policy debates and the significance, and possible future development, of Indigenous arts in the NT. The following four general observations are made, from an NT perspective.

- Indigenous artists, by and large, have not lost the cultural property on which their distinct arts are based and in situations of arts success have managed to access resources, many naturally-occurring, to facilitate arts production.
- Much arts success is predicated on Indigenous contemporary links to land—Indigenous artists paint, sing and dance their country—and most arts practitioners live on Aboriginal-owned land in rural and remote regions.
- This success has seen vigorous growth in market interest, including from public institutions, in Indigenous arts.
- Almost all Indigenous artists receive some form of income support payment from the Australian state—access to such payments, sometimes termed welfare, has not undermined the sustainability and growth of Indigenous arts.

NT policy context

In August 2001, there was a change in Territory government, with the Country-Liberal Party that had held power since self-government in 1978 losing office to the Australian Labor Party (ALP). The ALP was elected with an Arts and Culture Platform that includes the following important elements.

- An acknowledgement of the importance of arts and cultural heritage for wider Territory benefit, both in terms of somewhat unmeasurable energy, creativity and vibrancy and more tangible history, language and cultural identity. The primacy of Aboriginal Territorians in the arts is also recognised.
- A recognition that the arts and heritage industries make a major economic contribution to the NT at many levels, including the generation of employment and income for Territorians.
- A view that government has a responsibility to protect the intellectual property rights of creative artists.

The Martin Government has also articulated a commitment in its Economic Development Strategy to develop an IAS for the NT, the first time that an NT Government has ever made such a Territory-focused commitment (see NT Government 2002: 41). The IAS is to promote and further develop Indigenous arts. The IAS will be predicated on Indigenous control to protect its integrity, as well as to maximise the benefits that can flow back to

communities (ALP 2001). These two requirements embed two issues that will be investigated further. The first is that devolution or decentralisation to community-controlled arts organisations is not just a requirement in the arts because government should not provide such non-profit services itself, but also because this is a means to maintain artistic integrity (via community-controlled quality assurance). The second is more complex and could refer to the economic imperative to add value in the community (via a higher level of retailing) or to license arts product remuneratively, if manufacturing occurs outside the community.

The NT Government's desire to develop an IAS is predicated on a policy view—that is supported by empirical evidence—that there is a link between Indigenous engagement with the arts and general socioeconomic benefit, both in employment opportunity and additional income earned. Also, arts production and sale has important cultural and social meanings internal to producing communities, as well as broader social and cultural spin-offs to the NT generally. For these obvious reasons the NT Government is keen to promote and further develop Indigenous arts, while ensuring that existing successful ventures are maintained. As noted above, we certainly condone this precautionary principle, also echoed by the NT Arts Policy Review (Positive Solutions 2002a).

The NT Government is seeking to use Indigenous capacities, land rights and sustainable production as drivers of Indigenous economic development. Such a strategy makes sense given that economic development generally needs to be based on comparative advantage, and the Indigenous arts sector appears to provide a key market niche for Indigenous Territorians, as long as there is market demand. More broadly, NT Government policy is also looking to promote cultural tourism and cultural knowledge as drivers of Indigenous development. Both have links to the Indigenous arts sector. An Indigenous Tourism Strategy is being developed by the NT Tourist Commission (NTTC) at present and the potential of cultural knowledge, particularly in the spheres of land and natural resource management, is gaining enhanced recognition. Also concurrently, the NT Department of Business, Industry and Resource Development (DBIRD) is developing an export strategy for the NT and sees potential for Indigenous arts to contribute to this drive, presumably with sales on-shore to international and interstate visitors, as well as off-shore. DBIRD recognises, however, that Indigenous business development capacity may need to be enhanced if secure supply of arts products for export growth are to be sustained (DBIRD 2002).

At the inaugural Indigenous Economic Forum held in Alice Springs in March 2003, the Office of Indigenous Policy in the Chief Minister's Department gave the arts and cultural industries a high profile as one of four lead sectors selected for best-practice case studies. But the statistical background presented on the contemporary socioeconomic status of Indigenous Territorians and their employment prospects over the next decade provided a salutary reminder of the enormous economic development challenges ahead (Taylor & Kinfu 2003). The immediate NT Government response highlighted issues that will need to be incorporated in the development of an IAS—there is a need for a coordinated 'whole-of-NT Government' facilitation of Indigenous arts for the benefit both of Indigenous Territorians and the NT more generally.⁸

Wider policy developments

The NT Government's proposed policy on Indigenous arts needs to be placed in a broader national policy context, for there are some important concurrent developments. A number of these appear influenced by an unacceptable stagnation in the relatively low socioeconomic status of Indigenous Australians in the inter-censal period 1996–2001, a period that coincides with the Howard Governments' policy shift to practical reconciliation. These developments relate to public administration more generally, some focused on Indigenous policy and others on arts policy. While it is neither possible nor desirable to cover all framework issues here, the following are a selection of the most relevant.

- In 2002, the Myer *Report of the Contemporary Visual Arts and Crafts Inquiry* was released. While this Report contained limited specific analysis of Indigenous visual

arts, a CMC Communiqué in March 2003 did note that Commonwealth, State and Territory governments recognise the need to give priority to the role played by Indigenous Arts and Crafts Centres in this sector through further research and support.⁹

- In 2003, ATSIC is being reviewed. ATSIC is a major funder of two arts and culture programs, NACISS and the Regional Arts and Culture Strategy (RACS) that allocated over \$13 million nation-wide in 2001–02. In the ATSIC review context there may be opportunity to streamline these two important programs to partner emerging NT Government arts support initiatives.¹⁰
- Late in 2002, the Commonwealth Minister for Communications and the Arts commissioned a consultant to focus on remote Indigenous art centre best practice. This consultancy, driven by ministerial policy concern about the robustness of art centres, has not reported yet, but again might provide opportunity for policy coordination and fine-tuning.

Two Council of Australian Governments processes under the auspices of its reconciliation framework could also influence and inform the Territory-level development of an IAS.

- The development of a framework for reporting on Indigenous disadvantage by the Steering Committee for the Review of Commonwealth/State Service provision. This outcomes and outputs framework seeks to harmonise reporting in Indigenous affairs at all levels of government with those of the Commonwealth in general (see Department of Finance and Administration 2000; Productivity Commission 2002).
- The Indigenous Community Coordination Pilots (ICCPs) project that is seeking to foster inter-agency cooperation at a number of community and regional level situations. An IAS may try and replicate this for the complex functional area of arts support. The pilot at Wadeye community is of particular significance to the NT (ICCT 2003).

A policy opportunity

A combination of factors suggests that the time may be opportune to focus on the development of a policy framework for Indigenous arts in the NT. The governmental impetus is to principally develop Indigenous arts for the improved economic and social situation of Indigenous people. While it is clearly recognised in the ALP platform that the arts are good for a healthy society—and this is the political basis of general arts funding—the case for supporting Indigenous arts is more compelling. This is because there are an unusually high number of Indigenous artists in the NT and Indigenous arts is such a fundamental element of NT and Australian cultural life and identity. Yet to date an Indigenous arts policy framework has not been clearly articulated—an important opportunity to develop a coherent policy framework beckons.

An evolving arts policy framework

In recent years, NT Government Indigenous arts development funding has been fairly modest—strategic investments have been made, but have not been a part of an clear overarching arts policy framework.

Funding has largely been in the form of grants to individuals and organisations for particular project assistance. Exceptions have been ongoing operational support to positions located in Darwin and Katherine to facilitate and identify opportunities for Indigenous performing artists and for a performing arts marketing initiative. In 2001–02, assistance was also provided to the two key visual arts industry support organisations, ANKAAA and Desart.

There is no policy framework for Indigenous arts, except in the context of an emerging general policy framework for the arts in the NT. Key to this general policy framework is the findings of a review of the sector commissioned in 2002 by Arts NT. A summary of the review findings has been publicly released by Arts NT (Positive Solutions 2002b).

The review identified three inter-linked policy directions to guide development of strategies for arts and cultural development in the Territory.

- A strong and sustainable creative community—Industry Development.
- Strengthening communities through participation in creative activity and cultural development—Community Capacity Building.
- Creativity in life-long learning—Art and Education.

The Indigenous arts sector including music, dance, film and visual arts was identified as being of particular significance to the economic and social development of the Territory. The review also highlighted the importance of the Indigenous arts to defining Territory identity and its role as a major cultural tourism drawcard. The arts and crafts sector was identified as the major component of the sector and its cultural, social and economic importance was highlighted.

- The NT Government is now proposing a more focused and coordinated ‘whole-of-government’ approach be adopted to assist development of the Indigenous arts sector. Significant cross-departmental and government consultation and cooperation is envisaged across a range of agencies. Arts NT, a part of the NT Department of Community Development, Sports and Cultural Affairs (DCDSCA) would have the lead coordination role, perhaps facilitated by newly-established agencies such as the Office of Indigenous Policy and the Office of Territory Development.
- Arts NT has signalled possible roles for educational institutions such as the Batchelor Institute or the Northern Territory University (to be renamed Charles Darwin University) in further developing visual and performing arts skills training and resourcing. It is suggested that DBIRD and NTTC assist in areas of market and audience development.
- Indigenous arts strategies would also take advantage of relevant broader industry, education, social and community development programs and strategies both at federal and Territory levels. Examples may include international trade development strategies, Indigenous tourism strategies, business assistance programs, and an Indigenous economic development strategy.
- A particular challenge for Arts NT will be to negotiate common strategic partnerships with federal departments and agencies, particularly when, as discussed later, it remains a very junior partner in funding terms. Crucial federal partners in Indigenous-specific arts funding include ATSIIC and the Australia Council. Historically the overwhelming funding contribution and policy input, while lacking in coordination, has come from the Commonwealth and not the NT Government.

Attention to goals of maximising artistic outcomes for the Territory will involve improving Indigenous employment and training opportunities, improved economic and social returns to Indigenous artists, and improved governance and social outcomes for their communities. While it is desirable that additional resources be provided for new Indigenous arts initiatives it is equally important that the substantial resources currently available—particularly at federal level—be more efficiently and equitably utilised for the benefit of Indigenous arts development in the Territory, both for Territory and national benefit.

Irrespective of this emerging policy framework we note the following potential barriers to progress that will need to be carefully considered.

- It is not anticipated that the NT Arts budget will significantly increase in the next financial year owing to overall budgetary constraints, although there are stakeholder expectations for greater resources availability in subsequent years. If the NT Government is to assume a leading policy coordination role for this sector, enhanced future arts funding will be an important lever.
- The Indigenous arts sector is characterised generally by a lack of political homogeneity. The art centres certainly constitute a discrete group with a visual arts focus. At the same time there are arts practitioners in other urban and rural contexts

who may not constitute critical mass in terms of Territory-based strategies. Economies of scale in policy development and implementation may hamper whole-of-sector coverage.

- The complexities within the sector, even in a reasonably small jurisdiction like the NT, might present significant potential inertia to policy realisation. Often the issues are just too complicated for public policy processes to address, in part because of complex funding histories, and in part because of enormous diversity, both in community-based arts practice and capacity to engage with the market or to maintain arts infrastructure.
- No rational needs-based assessments have been made to date. Even if they were, it is difficult to see how arts needs could be readily differentiated from other support programs. The community-controlled Indigenous visual arts industry, arguably the greatest success, is highly dependent, but then the counterfactual issue is what community organisation, black or white, in the NT-based arts remote community context, is not?

Defining and describing the Indigenous arts sector

Defining the arts sector anywhere is difficult, but such problems are exacerbated when trying to define Indigenous arts in the NT. This is partly because there is potential for cross-cultural definitional dispute. It is also because there is a tendency in the NT to conflate the arts and more general cultural activity, and consequently to further blur an already unclear boundary between specific arts policy and broader cultural policy.

Does the Indigenous arts sector refer to any art produced or performed by an Indigenous person, or does it refer to distinctly Indigenous art forms? A problem with the former definition is the fact that it can be non-distinctive and undifferentiated from mainstream art forms (e.g. an Indigenous musician in an orchestra). Such a definition can also be questionable in inter-cultural collaborations that frequently occur in the arts (e.g. with music groups of mixed ethnicity or in collaborative print-making). The problem with the latter definition is that it can exclude Indigenous practitioners participating in mainstream activities. The Indigenous arts sector is comprised of three components: distinct Indigenous arts produced by Indigenous people, non-distinct arts produced by Indigenous people, and arts produced in inter-cultural collaborations.

It is necessary to differentiate the arts sector from more general areas of cultural activities, while recognising obvious connections and inter-dependencies. According to this view, community-based keeping places, Indigenous knowledge centres and language programs are not a part of the arts sector, even though they may have important synergies with the arts. Such areas have as much connection with education and community development, as with the arts. In this paper, therefore, the definition of the Indigenous art sector includes visual arts and crafts; the performing arts, including theatre, music and dance; film, television and new media; and literature. This definition can include tourist art, but excludes manufactured and mass-produced product. This tight definition of arts categories maintains a manageable arts focus. It does not, however, resile from recognising the fundamental inter-cultural complexity within such arts categories—there will always be a degree of definitional ambiguity and contestation.

An initial problem is that while there is some information, albeit inconsistent, about the Indigenous visual arts, there is very little about other art forms. In terms of overall scale and numbers of participants (discussed further below), the visual arts and crafts sector seems to dominate Indigenous engagement in the arts. Over 3,000 NT Indigenous artists participate in this sector on a full-time or part-time basis, supported by an infrastructure of over 50 community-based art centres (not all funded) and a myriad of commercial galleries and tourist outlets within and outside of the Territory. Two dedicated resource organisations representative of community visual arts centres, ANKAAA and Desart, are funded to provide overall sector support. Commercial galleries (often in other capital cities) promote the work of elite NT individual artists and groups through ongoing exhibitions. The Telstra National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Art Awards (NATSIAA)

showcases Indigenous art from throughout Australia, and is an important NT arts institution in its twentieth year.

Music

The Indigenous music sector has also shown great promise, but is well short of achieving its potential. Groups such as Yothu Yindi and Warumpi Band have achieved national and international recognition. Other very talented groups and individual musicians have achieved strong recognition at community and Territory level, with varying degrees of success at the national level. Very significant support in terms of recording and broadcasting facilities has been provided by the Central Australian Aboriginal Media Association (CAAMA) Music. Music Industry Development Incorporated (MIDI) in its submission indicated several factors which inhibit growth in the Territory music sector, including the lack of any comprehensive music sector infrastructure, remoteness, non-viable audience bases, and a lack of suitable venues and touring opportunities.

Film

The Indigenous film sector has seen significant development over recent years, but is still in its infancy. CAAMA Productions, Imparja and, to a lesser extent, Warlpiri Media have been key sector organisations for initial training and production experience. The Australian Film Commission, particularly through its Indigenous Unit, has been one important source of public sponsorship and support for Indigenous filmmakers in the NT and their involvement in wider industry opportunities.

Performing arts

Opportunities in the Indigenous performing arts (theatre and dance) sector have been somewhat limited within the NT. There are no permanent Indigenous dance or theatre companies, although a number of one-off community initiatives continue to be supported mainly through peak (non-Indigenous) arts bodies. There are some small-scale Indigenous dance enterprises such as Janganpa Dance, Nyangatjatjara and the Aboriginal Arts and Culture Centre, all in central Australia, that focus on delivery of dance to tourist audiences. Historically similar enterprises have struggled to maintain viability in the longer term. At the same time, performing groups from remote communities have formed for limited touring purposes, for example, to major festivals and important arts events in Australia and overseas. There has been ongoing participation by NT performers in the Sydney-based National Aboriginal and Islander Dance Theatre and its associated training programs.

Literature

Unfortunately, little information is available on Indigenous writing and literature in the NT, although IAD Press, within the Alice Springs based Institute for Aboriginal Development (IAD) is an important Indigenous publishing house for Indigenous (and other) authors from throughout Australia.

The value of Indigenous arts

An alternative way to describe the NT Indigenous arts sector is to estimate its monetary value. Again, however, such a valuation exercise is potentially problematic, partly because the Indigenous arts sector cannot be unambiguously defined, partly because commercial information on this sector is not officially collected, and partly because market valuations may not accord with Indigenous valuations. There are also different functional levels to the sector and therefore some propensity to double count. These different functional levels raise the question of value to whom—practitioners, art centres, Indigenous people, the wider arts community, businesses in the NT, interstate commercial galleries, the NT

economy or the wider population? At the NT level we have the following range of recent valuations, most focused on the visual arts and crafts.

- Positive Solutions (2002b) suggest that art and craft centres (of which Myer (2002) estimates that there are 54 in the NT) generate \$10 million of sales annually.
- Territory Tourism Selected Statistics estimates that, in 2000–01, about \$28 million was spent by visitors to the NT on Aboriginal art (undefined). A six year trend analysis suggests that this figure is below sales in 1995–96 and that expenditure on Aboriginal art peaked in 1997–98 at around \$50 million. The NT Travel Monitor estimates that, in 2001–02, tourists spent \$38 million on Aboriginal art, 4 per cent of total expenditure, up \$10m on the previous year (NTTC 2001, 2002).
- The Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) in its 1999–2000 Commercial Art Galleries Australia survey estimates that \$11 million of art was sold retail in the NT by 41 outlets, including Aboriginal art centres (ABS 2001: 4). While a figure on Aboriginal art is not provided (owing to problems of small scale) it is stated that almost all of this came from Aboriginal art sales.
- *The Arts and Crafts Centre Story* estimated that, in 1997–98 28, art centres (almost all in the NT) made \$6.4 million in sales (Altman 2000a: 85).
- More recently, in 2002, ANKAAA surveyed 18 of its member art centres (almost all of these located in the NT) and estimated that in 2001–02 their gross estimated turnover was \$6.23 million.¹¹
- Pre-election, the ALP estimated that Indigenous art sales in the NT were worth about \$50 million and rising (ALP 2001).
- In 2002, Altman et al. (2002: 67) estimated that the national value of Indigenous visual arts sales is between \$100 million and \$300 million, although this estimate included manufactured product. A significant proportion of this would derive from the NT.

Indigenous arts participation

Enumerating Indigenous arts practitioners in the NT is also fraught with difficulties. There is no official count of arts practitioners, though attempts have been made to quantify this group. The ABS 2001 Census indicates that there are 96 Indigenous visual arts and crafts professionals, 14 artists and related professionals, ten performing arts support workers, three musicians and related professionals, five actors, dancers and related professionals, and no authors and related professionals in the NT. However the ABS does not provide appropriate occupational categorisation for Indigenous arts practitioners who might also be participating in the CDEP scheme or receiving other income support payments. The sorts of numbers stated are clearly very different from those provided by arts organisations, again mainly in the visual arts area. The following are some examples.

- Altman (1989: 34) enumerates 2,500 Indigenous visual artists in the NT, representing 52 per cent of estimated Indigenous visual artists Australia-wide. If factored up by 25 per cent as suggested, the figure was 3,125.
- Wright (1999: 25) estimates 4,546 artists at 39 art centres surveyed (not all in the NT).
- Altman (2000a: 85) utilises 1997–98 information for 28 art centres and enumerates just over 4,000 artists, but not all in the NT.
- Myer (2002: 33) arbitrarily adds 5,000 Indigenous visual artists to the ABS-recorded NT total of 202 on an erroneous borrowing from Mercer's (1997) estimate of Indigenous visual artists supported Australia-wide under NACISS. This figure suggests that the NT has 25 per cent of Australia's visual artists and 75 per cent of Australia's Indigenous visual artists. This is probably an over-estimate, but nonetheless an indicator of the relative significance of the NT in the Indigenous art world.
- Positive Solutions (2002b: 4, 6) estimates that there are about 5,000–6,000 Indigenous *visual* artists nationally and some 70 per cent of Indigenous artists (of all media) live in the NT.

What such figures do not tell us is the significance of opportunities to engage in the production and sale of Aboriginal art for the estimated 72 per cent of Indigenous Australians in the NT who reside on Aboriginal-owned land. In particular regions, like Arnhem Land or parts of central Australia, and in particular residential contexts, like living at outstations, the arts represent the only local option for mainstream market engagement and earning of discretionary cash beyond the limits set by state income support programs.

Resourcing Indigenous arts

Just as it is difficult to define the Indigenous arts sector in terms of value or people engaged because of the imprecision and variability in the definition of the sector and because of the absence of accurate statistics, so it is hard to define resourcing of the sector. This resourcing template is further complicated by direct funding of arts organisations and individual practitioners by a number of different Commonwealth, Territory and other funders. Some provide Indigenous-specific programs (like ATSIAB of the Australia Council and ATSIC) and some do not (like other Boards of the Australia Council and, in the past, Arts NT). The focus here on Indigenous-specific funding.

At the Commonwealth level, ATSIC and the Australia Council are the main sponsors of Indigenous arts. ATSIC plays a key role in supporting Indigenous visual arts in the NT primarily through operational support for art and craft centres and their regional representative bodies ANKAAA and Desart; 75 per cent of ATSIC's NACISS is devoted to supporting these organisations (ATSIC 2002). More specifically, in 2001–02, 20 out of 58 (34%) NACISS-supported organisations and 24 out of 75 (32%) NACISS projects were located in the NT—with a total expenditure of \$2.7 million. The NT Indigenous arts sector does not do so well under ATSIC's RACS which provides support to foster, maintain and preserve culture. Ten out of 170 (6%) RACS-supported organisations and 12 out of 194 (6%) RACS projects were in the NT—with total expenditure in 2001–02 of \$152,000.

All up, the NT Indigenous population that represents about 12.5 per cent of the Australian Indigenous population received 21 per cent of ATSIC Preservation and Promotion of Indigenous Culture Funding—a relatively high proportion of NACISS support, but a relatively low proportion of RACS support. This apparent anomaly can be explained in part by the history of the development of NACISS, which took over the funding of art centres from the Australia Council from 1992 (Wilson 2001). It is also noteworthy that over 20 per cent of the NT Indigenous adult population is on CDEP, with many participating in the arts. While CDEP in itself is either a part-time employment or income support scheme, ATSIC also funds organisational infrastructure to administer the scheme and in some situations this is directly beneficial to art centres and individual artists.

The Australia Council supports Indigenous artists mainly through ATSIAB. In 2001–02, the Australia Council supported 61 projects in the NT totalling \$1.88 million. Of these, 24 projects valued at \$624,000 were for identified Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Arts projects (Australia Council 2002: 125). It is highly likely that other arts support is available to NT Indigenous practitioners, although issues of access and equity and residential locational disadvantage may limit opportunity to access such projects that are mainly located in the urban centres of Darwin and Alice Springs.

The Commonwealth agency DCITA has also supported Indigenous visual arts in the NT under its Networking the Nation grants program designed to assist the economic and social development of rural, regional and remote Australia. Among 80 projects (worth \$50 million) targeted to give direct benefit to Indigenous communities, are two with an allocation of \$1.3 million to assist ANKAAA and Desart provide e-commerce websites to member art centres in northern and central Australia.

DCITA also has three national competitive grants programs—Festivals Australia, Playing Australia, and Visions of Australia—that NT Indigenous arts organisations can access. Information (cross-tabulated by Indigenous specific and NT-focused support) provided by DCITA indicates that NT Indigenous arts applications have had variable success across these programs in the last three financial years. In Visions of Australia, all NT-supported

applications have been for Indigenous proposals, with resources provided increasing from 1.8 per cent of total appropriations in 2000–01 to 5 per cent of the total in 2002–03. Playing Australia has supported one of four applications from the NT in the last three years. Festivals Australia has supported four Indigenous out of 14 successful applications from the NT, with total value of Indigenous allocations being between 1.2 per cent and 3.5 per cent of the total. In 2002–03, these three programs had a pool of \$6.7 million. DCITA makes two points in relation to these programs. First, the benefit to the NT from Playing Australia and Visions of Australia is greater than indicated because much support is provided to bring productions to the NT. Second, allocations are dependent on both the number of applications made and their quality, as all applications are assessed competitively. It is noted that NT arts organisations might lack sufficient infrastructure to develop competitive applications, an issue discussed later in this paper.¹²

At the Territory level, the main funding body is the DCDSCA. Between 1995–96 and 2000–01 there was no increase in allocation to the NT Arts Sponsorship Program from the NT Government. This stagnation did not correlate with the increased expectations of funding bodies and communities over the period (Positive Solutions 2002a: 8). Between 2000 and 2003, funding through the NT Arts Sponsorship Program to Indigenous artists and arts organisations totalled about \$400,000, although this does not include the value of funding to non-Indigenous organisations with some component of Indigenous activities (Colton 2003: 4). The new focus of the NT Government on Indigenous arts is clearly evidenced by pre- and post-election support: in 2000–01, just \$52,000 was spent on Indigenous-specific support, while in 2001–02 this increased to \$185,000, a threefold increase. This funding provides support to peak bodies, as well as activity support for artists and organisations. The following table provides an estimate of Indigenous-specific expenditure and then adds to this an estimate (at 15%) of Indigenous access to non-Indigenous organisations. It can be seen from Table 1 that funding for Indigenous specific programs has been tracking upwards steeply, from a low base. Data has only been available over two years, since 2001.

Table 1. Estimates of Indigenous-specific funding as a proportion of total arts sponsorship by Arts NT, 2000–01 and 2001–02

| Year | Total Arts Sponsorship (million) | Indigenous Specific (million) | Per cent | Indigenous specific + share of non-Indigenous (million) ^a | Per cent |
|---------|----------------------------------|-------------------------------|----------|--|----------|
| 2000–01 | \$2.61 | \$0.052 | 2 | \$0.292 | 11 |
| 2001–02 | \$2.61 | \$0.185 | 7 | \$0.425 | 16 |

a. Based on the assumption that 15% of the annual allocation of \$1.6 million to non-Indigenous organisations was accessed by Indigenous arts stakeholders.

At the local government level, the NT lags well behind other States in support for the arts in general. Local government cultural funding per person in the NT is less than half the national average and is the lowest in Australia (ABS 2002: 16).¹³ This is partly because discretionary local government funding is allocated in Australia on a population basis without due regard to cost disabilities or population distribution, and the NT with its small population (1% of Australia's total population) and massive size is disadvantaged. However, in 1999–2000, the NT Government spent over four times the State average per person on cultural activities (i.e. at the State government spending level). It is also increasingly common for the arts to seek corporate and philanthropic support. One example of corporate sector support in the NT is the NATSIAA, which has been sponsored by Telstra for many years. However, the relatively small size of the NT economy, and private and philanthropic sectors, suggests that it is disadvantaged in this area in the wider Australian context.¹⁴

This brief quantification of Indigenous-specific arts funding raises two very important issues in the context of developing an IAS. First, Arts NT (and the NT Government) is currently a relatively small player in funding Indigenous arts in the NT. In 2001–02, its support may have constituted as little as 5 per cent of the total direct Indigenous-specific

allocation to the arts in the NT, bearing in mind that Indigenous arts practitioners would have accessed some mainstream arts services. This suggests that an arts strategy driven by the NT Government will need to be predicated on strong mutually-beneficial partnership relationships with Commonwealth agencies. Second, the inter-governmental nature of funding has resulted in little NT-wide coordination of Indigenous arts resourcing allocations. The NT could embrace a key role in this important coordination role.

Arguing for Indigenous arts support

New public investment in any sector, including the arts, seems to be contingent these days on compelling economic argument that demonstrates the investment is worthwhile and may be essential, because without underwriting some form of market failure would mean that the activity would disappear. This has certainly been one avenue to argue for enhanced Commonwealth investment in Indigenous arts since the early 1980s. This form of argument may not appeal to either arts practitioners or their representative organisations, but it can be persuasive and need not detract from other equally important social and cultural arguments for the arts. Here we seek to outline two important economic arguments for the arts: the positive direct returns to arts practitioners from investment in arts organisations that would not have occurred without operational subsidy; and the indirect and induced benefits from the arts. We undertake the latter in two forms, easily recognised positive spin-offs to tourism and less recognised, but equally important, spin-offs from the arts to ‘Caring for Country’.

Investment returns

The public administration rationale for operational support to Aboriginal art centres currently focuses on outcomes and outputs frameworks. In the past the reverse, an inputs to outputs and outcomes framework, has been used to indicate a sound public sector investment. While this outcomes and outputs framework only has direct relevance for community-controlled art centres, it does indicate the sorts of returns that can be generated from arts investment. While a range of ratios can be calculated, we focus here on just one, the ratio of artists’ incomes (total outcomes) generated by each dollar of operational subsidy. Information in Table 2 summarises findings over the past 20 years.

Table 2. Ratio of art centres operational subsidies (aggregate) to artists’ aggregate recorded income

| Report | Financial year | Ratio of operational support to artists income |
|------------------------------|----------------|--|
| Pascoe (1981) | 1979–80 | 2.0 |
| Aboriginal Arts Board (1986) | 1984–85 | 4.3 ^a |
| Altman (1989) | 1987–88 | 4.3 |
| Mercer (1997) | 1995–96 | 1.5 |
| Altman (2000a) | 1997–98 | 1.6 |
| ANKAAA (2002) ^b | 2001–02 | 3.2 |

a. In art centre sales, not artists’ incomes.

b. Data provided by ANKAAA to CAEPR in 2002.

While these ratios are highly variable, they all indicate that a positive income return is generated for artists from every dollar of operational support. The most recent ratio, based on information collected by ANKAAA for 18 of its member arts centres (not all in the NT), is instructive on two counts. First it shows that NACISS operational support represents good value for money: in aggregate \$1.15 million of NACISS funding generates \$6.23 million of sales and \$3.68 million return to 2,650 artists. Second, it shows that not only public investment generates this outcome—artists themselves are contributing the majority \$2.55 million to the operating costs of their arts centres (in 40% sales commission). This is a statistic that is often overlooked in arguments about public investment and Indigenous

dependency and debunks some long-standing myths—community-controlled art centres are in fact underwritten by a public/private funding mix.¹⁵

It is important to recognise that this operational support has been provided since 1992 by ATSIC under its NACISS program. The direct benefit of such operational support in providing opportunity for thousands of artists to practise and generate additional income cannot be overstated.¹⁶ Moral and policy questions must be raised about why individual artists must contribute 40 per cent of their sales income (mainly based on wholesale, not retail exhibition, prices), when their activity has already added value to wider commercial and public interests.

Indirect benefits

The Indigenous arts sector in the NT generates indirect and induced financial benefits (this is termed 'multiplier effect' or 'spin-off benefit') to a range of other industry stakeholders—notably the NT tourism industry, Australian tourism and interstate and international commercial galleries. The sector also generates important unrecognised benefits in the area of biodiversity maintenance and natural resource management.

Benefits to tourism in the NT are perhaps the easiest of these indirect benefits to quantify because the NTTC surveys international and interstate visitors about their motivations for visiting the NT and their activities. The most recent Travel Monitor survey for 2001–02, based on a commercial accommodation survey (CAS), estimated that there were 521,000 international and 672,000 interstate visitors to the NT. The survey indicates that 13 per cent of interstate visitors and 27 per cent of international visitors to the NT came 'to experience real Aboriginal culture'. What is more, 58 per cent of international and 48 per cent of interstate CAS visitors included Aboriginal art or cultural activities as part of their Territory visit. This translated into an estimated \$38 million expenditure on Aboriginal art and \$31 million on cultural tours (NTTC 2002: 10, 26).¹⁷

The sale of NT Indigenous arts interstate and overseas is sometimes referred to as leakage from the NT regional economy, in part because value is added in commissions charged and jobs created outside the NT. However such a representation is probably inaccurate because such exports actually promote the quality of NT Indigenous arts and act as a marketing tool for the Territory. There is no doubt that Indigenous fine art gains much of its credibility for excellence from sales at the nation's leading commercial galleries and auction houses in southern State capitals and such credibility does not come gratis. As argued below the NT, with a resident population of just 200,000, is an insufficiently large arts market for the sector to be financially sustainable, even when supplemented by international and interstate visitors. Indeed even if international and interstate visitor nights are hypothetically converted to full-time residents, the NT population only increases by 10 per cent.¹⁸

There is a market failure problem here because much of the economic rent generated by the Indigenous arts sector cannot be captured by the artists or their representative organisations, two exceptions being copyright fees and interstate sales of CDs. While benefits are being generated from the arts to the tourism sector, it is impossible to identify the share of benefit going to distinct business interests and consequently it is impossible to extract a fee from them on some user-benefit basis. It would be very difficult (and not desirable) to exclude the tourism industry from benefiting from the arts indirectly and the spin-off benefits from the arts are hard to contain or quantify. Because there is wider recognisable Territory benefit in such situations, it makes sense for the NT Government to intervene and invest in the arts.

There are additional unrecognised benefits associated with contemporary arts practice, especially in situations where this is undertaken by Indigenous people residing at outstation communities. A growing body of scientific evidence is becoming available, mainly for the tropical savannas, that can ecologically quantify these benefits. The use of natural resources by arts practitioners is in itself positive, because this provides incentive for Indigenous resource owners to use their ecological knowledge to manage these

resources sustainably. But there are other environmental spin-off benefits generated while people reside on their country—the maintenance of customary fire regimes (that reduce hot fires which destroy raw material inputs to the arts), the monitoring and reduction of invasive weeds, and the harvesting of introduced feral animals (see Whitehead 2003).

There are complex inter-relationships here. On one hand, people need to participate in the arts to sustain themselves on country, with associated economic, social and ecological benefits. On the other hand, while participating in such activity, they generate wider spin-off benefits in terms of resource management. In the past, such positive spin-offs from both customary and market activities have not been recognised, but attitudes are slowly changing, as evidenced at the Indigenous Economic Forum held in Alice Springs in March 2003.

A cautionary note: Limits to growth

It is important to maintain a degree of realism in new policy proposals. Hence we must accept that, important as it is, the Indigenous arts sector is only a small sector within a small and open (trade-dependent) Territory economy. There are risks for Indigenous communities in concentrating on one export. While in many situations this risk cannot be avoided because there is no other significant market engagement opportunity, the risk is ameliorated by income support and other customary activities. Two cautionary notes are needed: one on the current and potential monetary significance of the Indigenous arts sector for Indigenous people; the other on some of the limits on Territory-based potential for growth given its small and dispersed population.

In terms of economic opportunity, in 1987–88 it was estimated that 2,504 Indigenous artists in the NT earned \$3.6 million, that is an average of \$1,437 each (Altman 1989: 34). In 1997–98, at 28 art centres (not all in the NT) 4,080 artists earned \$3.9 million, a far lower average of \$950 per artist (Altman 2000a: 85). More recently, data provided by ANKAAA for 2001–02 indicates that an estimated 2,650 artists in its region (again, not all in the NT) earned \$3.68 million at an average of \$1,388 per artist. This last figure is remarkably similar to 1987–88 (despite the consumer price index increasing by 45% in the intervening 15 years).

In the 2001 Census there were an estimated 36,526 Indigenous people aged over 15 in the NT. According to Taylor and Kinfu (2003), the gross reported income for this population was \$339 million. If we accept the commonly-used maximum figure of 5,000 Indigenous arts practitioners in the NT and allocate to them an average arts income of \$1,400 per producer, this generates \$7 million of income, representing just 2 per cent of gross reported Indigenous income in 2001. If this figure were increased to \$10 million it would still only represent 3 per cent, and even if it doubled in the next five years it would be unlikely to constitute a significant component of gross reported income for Indigenous Australians in the NT. Any suggestion of an arts-led recovery of the Indigenous economy, or of the arts as the central plank of Indigenous economic development, must be treated with caution. In some regional contexts, opportunity to work in the arts and generate additional cash income is crucially important, but overall Indigenous under-development will only be partially addressed via the arts.¹⁹

An associated warning must be sounded in relation to the small overall size of the NT population and its capacity to financially sustain a diversity of arts practices. The total NT population of just below 200,000 is not only small, but diverse—there are fundamentally two populations in the NT, urban and rural. The former are mainly non-Indigenous (83% of non-Indigenous Territorians live in Darwin and Alice Springs) and the latter mainly Indigenous (72% of Indigenous people live on Aboriginal-owned land). Of the latter, the population is highly dispersed: 14,000 Indigenous people live at 570 places with populations of less than 200; 20,000 live at 50 localities with populations in the range 200–999; and 12,000 live in nine towns of 1,000–2,000 population (Taylor & Kinfu 2003).

These population peculiarities raise important issues about audience size. It is doubtful if the small and dispersed NT population (even if supplemented by annualised visitor

numbers of 21,000) could sustain a season of theatre or dance in the same way that larger capital cities might. The changing tourism audience could provide seasonal opportunities, but history suggests that this is not an audience that can sustain expressive arts experience. Indigenous performing groups from communities have been participating at arts festivals, exhibition events, and one-off events in southern States and overseas for decades. Such tours are characterised by a limited time away, a small number of performers, and a high degree of subsidisation because of travel costs. In the NT such performances can only be provided at local or major festivals like NATSIAA. This issue of small audiences creates a bias against some art forms, like theatre and performance art, while also explaining the need to export other art forms like visual art, film, and music to wider markets. A permanent Indigenous theatre in the NT would require a substantial and heavily subsidised touring program. It is important that these issues of scale and viability are not overlooked.

Stakeholder perspectives

In March approximately 100 stakeholders were invited to make a submission on the development of the IAS. Stakeholders were asked to outline the nature of their activities, and succinctly state what they saw as key issues in the industry, perceived barriers to development of the Indigenous arts and some innovative, but realistic, suggestions for change. A wide range of stakeholders have made 32 submissions (see Appendix 2), from small art centres to government departments. It is unfortunate that the important perspective of commercial galleries is missing from the submissions.

While several stakeholders have a diversity of interests in the arts, for the sake of simplicity they have been divided into groups depending on their primary focus: visual (V) and non-visual (NV). Submissions from three groups—Artback, ATSIC and the DCDSCA's Local Government and Regional Development Division—have an equal focus in both areas (B). To date there have been 16 submissions in relation to visual arts, 13 in relation to non-visual arts and 3 that cover both. Non-visual arts submissions contain data on a diversity of art forms including theatre, music, dance, writing and film. New media is covered under visual arts.

There is little or no prioritisation of the issues in the submissions. However, it is clear that several issues are of concern to many organisations. When these submissions were analysed (see Appendix 3) by the groupings mentioned above (NV, V and B), the issues of primary concern related to human resourcing and funding. Other issues such as intellectual property and cross-border jurisdictions also arose.

Visual arts

Human resourcing is a key issue for the visual arts sector. The need for more staff, particularly in regional and remote areas, was raised in several submissions, though views about the type of positions required varied. The general message is that art centres and their regional resource bodies are understaffed. Art centre staff often carry out diverse tasks and the demands on their time are great and probably increasing, given, for example, stricter reporting requirements from funding bodies. It is recognised that having numerous additional novice art coordinators scattered across the NT would be unhelpful. However the establishment of several support positions based in regional centres like Alice Springs and Katherine, as well as at least one identified position based at Arts NT, is likely to have a positive impact in advising on issues, including human resourcing, at art centres.

Given the small scale of art centre operations, it is probably a truism that a centre is only as good as its staff. Many art centres have a track record of low staff retention (sometimes caused by staff burn-out) with attendant organisational loss of corporate memory. This in turn can have a direct impact on the long-term stability and performance of centres, prerequisites for developing economic and social benefits. As Submission No. 10 noted:

A re-evaluation of the staffing in most art centres is necessary, ensuring that each has at least one full-time person to work directly with the artists as an art coordinator, and a second person to run the business as a manager. It still seems to be assumed by funding bodies that one person can run the business, promote and market the product made there, work with the artists on production matters all day, attend interstate gallery openings, write grant submissions and acquittals and deal on a person-by-person basis with 15–150 artists.

Another aspect of the human resourcing issue is professional development for staff, especially in the areas of business skills, governance and administration. Access to education and training opportunities can be difficult due to the remoteness of many art centres and finding the funds to attend training can be difficult. Access to training (e.g. acquiring skills in new media) for art producers is another issue raised in submissions.

Funding issues in the visual arts sector, and particularly for art centres, revolve around a tension over the roles played by centres and whether they should be treated as economic enterprises and/or cultural/social enterprises. Clearly centres play both roles in communities. Several submissions highlighted the pressure that art centres are under to reduce costs and to become financially self-sufficient and that if and when this occurs funding is often cut. Some stakeholders see this practice as one of punishing success.

Another key issue, which is highlighted in the submissions, is a lack of coordination between funding bodies. Conflicting timeframes for grant applications is one concern, but more broadly there appears to be a perception that inter-agency communications are poor, both at the Territory and Commonwealth levels.

A related issue is that of appropriate State jurisdictions: who should be supporting art centres and communities that lie outside the NT? In particular, NT-based training institutions and regional resource bodies are approached to support communities/art centres that lie outside the NT.

Issues associated with intellectual property and authenticity are of concern for stakeholders. There is a market in the NT for artworks that falsely claim to be Indigenous made product (or falsely state the degree of Indigenous involvement in production). Such practice ‘... leads to a decrease in artist income, a reduction in community-based cash flow, the increased production of inferior product qualities and an overall devaluation of the industry’ (Kover 2000: 15; see also Altman et al. 2002).

Other art forms

One particular issue associated with human resourcing that was raised in many submissions is the lack of training facilities and employment opportunities for Indigenous performing artists in the NT. Many performers in the NT live at remote communities and this has an impact on accessing training, as well as accessing the markets in which to perform. Further, there is concern about the lack of follow-up support for performing artists who may have been trained or who have performed and toured. That is, there is often insufficient opportunity for continuing training and/or employment for individuals seeking to work in the industry once they have returned to their home communities.

A lack of recognition—of past and present achievements and potential for future development—is an issue in the non-visual arts sector. Many submissions claimed that while the visual arts have a high public profile, the performing arts in particular still struggle for recognition from both government and the public. As Submission No. 30 notes:

While Aboriginal visual artists have achieved some measure of recognition and fame, opportunities for harnessing the talent of local Aboriginal writers and performers have been less forthcoming.

Many non-visual arts submissions again highlight the need for greater coordination between funding bodies and between arts organisations. The lack of a coordinated approach can result in a lack of awareness in communities about what opportunities exist. This concern about a lack of coordination is also partly reflected in response about

funding insecurity in the non-visual Indigenous arts sector, as well as an uncertainty about purposes for which funds are available.

There is currently no Indigenous performing arts body in the NT. Many of the issues raised above could be more easily addressed if such a body existed. An Indigenous performing arts organisation could facilitate a consolidation of existing efforts and ultimately a more efficient approach to the support and development of this element of the arts industry. Further, many submissions called for the establishment of a large-scale annual Indigenous performing arts event. The following comment in Submission No. 2 focuses on the music sector, but the concept could be broadened to Indigenous performing arts more generally:

[I suggest the development of] ... a major Indigenous performance event held in Darwin or Alice Springs annually. The level of talent amongst the indigenous musicians of the NT is amazing. The NT should be to Indigenous Music what Tamworth is to Country Music and the only way that this will happen is for the Government to support the development of a major festival over a 5 year period.

Emerging issues for stakeholder consultations

This Issues Paper has been prepared for stakeholder consultations. While the discussion above and thoughtful submissions have raised many issues, these have been clustered here into a number of emergent issues for discussion with stakeholders at meetings to be held in Alice Springs and Darwin.

1. Is an IAS (versus a Cultural Strategy) possible if we do not make a concerted effort to address the complex issue of what is the Indigenous arts sector? If such a definition is not possible, is it possible to develop an Indigenous arts strategy? To what extent is the geographic location of the arts activity of relevance?
2. In seeking to define an Indigenous arts sector in the NT, should the highly-visible and well-developed Indigenous visual arts and crafts industry be differentiated from other arts components of this sector? Would a bifurcated definition of the arts require a bifurcated Indigenous arts strategy?
3. The geographic jurisdiction of the IAS is the NT, but there are already some cross-border linkages in visual and performing arts. How can such linkages be accommodated and what are the benefits and the costs?
4. Is it possible to develop an IAS in the absence of accurate statistical information about the scale, value, diversity and resourcing of the sector? How important is it to research such issues and who has the capacity to undertake such research?
5. The NT Government has articulated a policy aspiration to support the arts, with much of this aspiration being driven by a recognised link between Indigenous arts development and Indigenous community and economic development on one hand, and NT tourism development and export growth on the other. Are there dangers for the sector in aligning with the economic policy priorities of the NT Government?
6. At the same time that the NT Government wants to demonstrate policy leadership in this important area, there are indications that additional financial resources to develop the arts may not be readily available in the short-term owing to budgetary constraints. Is it possible to take a leading role in arts sector development without additional investment up-front? If this investment cannot be provided with new dollar allocations, can it be provided in-kind?
7. Alternatively, if we assume that the NT Government has some additional resources to invest in the arts sector, where should these be strategically targeted? There is some suggestion that existing successes in Indigenous arts should be prioritised to consolidate gains. What other priorities should take precedence and what is the appropriate means to rank new initiatives?

8. The NT Government has indicated that it is committed to working collaboratively with all relevant stakeholders in progressing Indigenous economic development, and that a more coherent policy framework across the whole of NT Government is needed. How can an IAS be thoroughly integrated into this policy framework?
9. Should Arts NT, an arm of the NT Government focused on NT arts policy, be charged with taking the lead-agency role in Indigenous arts development in the NT? Can Arts NT effectively coordinate the activities of other agencies like NTTC, DBIRD, and the NT Department of Primary Industries and Environment in facilitating a whole-of-NT Government approach to resourcing and growing the Indigenous arts sector?
10. How can the NT Government ensure that it takes a lead role in inter-governmental cooperation and collaboration with Commonwealth agencies, especially the Australia Council, ATSIC and DCITA, to ensure a strategic and well-coordinated approach to Indigenous arts sector development? Are there any models emerging from the ICCP that can be transported to the arts? Is there a need to diversify the apparently intractable (but very productive) operational support dependence of art centres?
11. What other arts brokerage roles should the NT Government undertake—for example, in encouraging non-government organisations and philanthropic interests and ensuring a dialogue between peak Indigenous arts bodies located in the NT like ANKAAA and Desart? What role can the NT Government play in fostering relationships with private sector sponsors for innovative key activities, perhaps modelled on the best-practice Telstra NATSIAA?
12. Is there a case for a tripartite agreement between ATSIC, Australia Council and Arts NT that will see ATSIC sponsor community-based arts development, ATSIAB arts development across all forms, and an Arts NT focus on coordinating arts industry development?
13. What steps need to be taken to ensure that arts success at the community level is combined with economic development and business success? How can the NT Government extend an industry support role to, for example, business training, business planning, and assistance with marketing?
14. Is there room for efficiency dividends to be generated from the arts bureaucracy, arts organisations and programs? Can arts organisations, that are in the non-profit sector and often operate as monopolies, become more effective? How can this be done without opportunity to transparently benchmark performance against other Indigenous and non-Indigenous arts organisations? Is there a need to build business development capacity? Is there a role for DBIRD here?
15. How can arts excellence and sustainability be pursued, encouraged and guaranteed? How can current industry participants be challenged to both grow and be innovative? While the remarkable commitment and performance of some managers of arts centres is acknowledged, the current high turnover of staff (averaging two to three years) undermines sound business and succession planning and incentives for current managers to be accountable for longer-term performance.
16. How can we ensure that high quality staff are appointed to Indigenous arts organisations and programs? How can we support these staff often working in isolated and very demanding circumstances? Should additional non-core functions be attached to successful community arts enterprises, particularly without adequate additional operational resourcing?
17. How can arts development programs be extended to those regions that are currently unresourced? Who should undertake the needs analysis and the arts development work?
18. How can we ensure a win/win outcome for all stakeholders from the current IAS development exercise? How do we get arts practitioners, their representative organisations, and federal and Territory bureaucrats to own the IAS and work together, in an area fraught with politics, to ensure its implementation?

19. How do we extend the stakeholder base to include not just intergovernmental stakeholders, but also the corporate and tertiary education sectors? This is especially pertinent given the enhanced NT Government investment in the restructured Charles Darwin University. Is there a need for rigorous market research about audiences for Indigenous arts in the NT?
20. Are there opportunities to convert some recent initiatives in the areas of arts intellectual property protection to ensure spin-off benefits to the Indigenous arts sector? This is a potentially fruitful area for progress given that the Ministerial Council on Consumer Affairs has given the NT Government lead-agency status in pursuing consumer (and producer) protection for Indigenous Australians.

Towards an Indigenous arts strategy

It is one thing to have a political commitment to an IAS. It is quite another, as we have shown above, to define the sector, understand how it operates (in all its geographic, organisational and art forms diversity), structure a sensible arts support strategy and target support to Indigenous arts practitioners on an accepted policy basis.

An IAS should incorporate broad principles of government policy, including questions of access and equity, mechanisms for consultation, effective participation in decision-making, and principles of community empowerment. It should also incorporate general principles of government arts support including principles of ‘arms length’ funding, peer assessment, and a recognition that Indigenous artists are contemporary practitioners engaging in a range of art forms. Enhanced Indigenous representation on the Arts Grants Board, as well as the convening of appropriate Indigenous steering committees should be considered. It is also important that decision-making processes are supported by specialist staff.

Other issues include recognition and/or support for:

- the intellectual property rights and moral rights of Indigenous peoples;
- occupational health and safety standards pertaining to good arts practice;
- ‘country’ as a primary source of inspiration for many Indigenous artists;
- the regional diversity of Indigenous cultures;
- issues of sustainability in arts development for Indigenous communities;
- issues of ecological sustainability in the harvest of raw materials for arts production;
- the role of Indigenous arts organisations in broader family and community social support; and
- the importance of genuine ownership of arts projects and practices via sound governance.

There is clearly a Territory-wide and national benefit from sustained and enhanced investment in this sector. But, more importantly, there is an immediate potential benefit for Indigenous Territorians. The Indigenous visual arts, in particular, create employment and income opportunities in many situations often devoid of any mainstream labour markets. In terms of identity, Indigenous arts are both a product of connection to country and at the same time a means to politically, socially and economically maintain that connection—the arts are a source of additional and discretionary cash income that provides a means for Indigenous people to finance connection to, and residence on, their country.

This Issues Paper has argued that the NT enjoys an undisputed national leadership role in Indigenous arts, and especially the visual arts, in Australia. This generates significant direct and indirect economic benefits for Indigenous arts practitioners and their communities, as well as a number of sectors within the Territory and national economies. The Issues Paper ends with some initial thoughts about how an IAS—a longer-term planning framework for Indigenous arts—might be structured and its implementation staged.

The critical role for an IAS must be to help sustain, and then grow, the Indigenous art sector. The sector has proven to be remarkably sustainable over the past 30 years. Sustainability has at least three crucial elements, and all too often there is undue emphasis on only the first.

- The economic sustainability of Indigenous arts will be dependent on maintaining market demand, ensuring security of supply and maintaining operational support where this is critical to market engagement.
- The ecological sustainability of Indigenous arts will be dependent on the sustainable use of naturally-occurring materials in situations where they are critical inputs to arts practice.
- The social sustainability of Indigenous arts will be dependent on the constant renewal, adaptation and innovation of customary practices and contemporary politics; robust value and social systems; and attachment to country.

More recently, governance has been identified as the critical 'fourth pillar' of sustainability and many submissions to this strategy development process have highlighted the need for robust arts institutions as a pivotal element in arts sustainability, especially in remote community contexts (Mining Minerals and Sustainable Development (MMSD) Project 2002: 23–4).

What are the appropriate over-arching advocacy and 'niche' support roles for the NT Government in sustaining and growing this sector? The over-arching advocacy role is clearly to champion Indigenous arts both intra-governmentally within the NT and at inter-governmental levels, to demonstrate leadership in this arena. The support role is to find an appropriate policy space that complements the arts development role of the Australia Council and the community-focused arts role of ATSIC. This suggests to us that the niche role for the IAS might be in supporting Indigenous elements within the proposed NT arts policy framework—industry development, community capacity building, and art and education—while also investing in protecting Territory competitive advantage and in growing the market.

We emphasise that, in direct arts support, the IAS should strategically focus on a few areas where it can value add rather than compete with other major funding programs. At the same time, there will be a role for lead, joint or leveraged funding. We also believe that strategic decisions will need to be made so that new NT investments are initially focused on delivering low-risk outcomes to arts stakeholders and the Territory, with higher risk innovation being staged later as the IAS consolidates. This in turn will mean an initial focus on those areas that have a track record of success, on what is exportable and on what can be sustained in the market.

To play an effective advocacy role the IAS will need to:

- educate the full range of NT agencies, including central agencies, about the broad value of Indigenous arts to the Territory;
- champion the contribution of Indigenous arts to the identity of the NT and the nation;
- provide authority for Arts NT, as lead agency, to broker a meaningful whole-of-NT Government approach to Indigenous arts;
- resource a specialist Indigenous arts unit within Arts NT to undertake this championing role; and
- provide a comprehensive and ongoing assessment of the sector including needs assessment, statistical profiling, resourcing audits, possibly in collaboration with the Northern Territory University (Charles Darwin University from October 2003).

At the intergovernmental level, the IAS should:

- invest in alliance building with key Commonwealth funding agencies;
- advocate the contribution of NT Indigenous arts to national cultural life to highlight that Commonwealth support is for national, not just NT, benefit;

- recognise the strategic significance of the relatively large Indigenous share of the total Australian Indigenous population (12.5%) compared to the relatively small total share of the total Australian population (1%);
- expand the range of stakeholders in Indigenous arts beyond existing agencies to ensure diversity of support;
- take lead agency roles in the CMC and other Indigenous arts forums; and
- Encourage enhanced NT local and community government engagement with Indigenous arts.

At the NT Indigenous arts support level, the following indicative range of activities might be considered to be progressed over several years:

- assist Indigenous arts organisations to identify and access funding sources, especially from the Australia Council and DCITA;
- incrementally enhance Indigenous specific NT investment in the arts;
- identify and broker appropriate support partnerships;
- maintain an overall communications strategy with the sector;
- broker training and skills enhancement for artists, arts administrators and governing bodies with the NT tertiary education sector;
- assist the sector to develop greater non-government organisation and private sector partnerships;
- broker specific Indigenous arts marketing initiatives with appropriate NT agencies;
- ensure arts support is integrated with emerging NT industry strategies like those for export and cultural tourism;
- sponsor inter-arts activities e.g. exhibitions with performing art and music;
- broker specific business and strategic planning support to arts organisations;
- assess capital needs of the sector and source appropriate support;
- develop public education packages to ensure protection of intellectual property and fair trading practice;
- specifically advocate the need for robust and secure organisational sector support; and
- promote greater community awareness and appreciation of Indigenous art particularly through schools and with the active participation of Indigenous artists.

Next steps

There is no shortage of material written about Indigenous arts in Australia. While much of the policy literature raises important issues for arts policy consideration, there is a degree of review fatigue evident within the sector and a degree of scepticism about whether the situation will ever change. This is evident in submissions to our IAS development processes. There is some concern that even an incremental restitution of NT funding equity to Indigenous arts development, let alone growth, after years of relative Territory neglect will not be politically palatable to the majority of Territorians, despite the preeminent position of NT Indigenous arts in the NT and Australia.

This Issues Paper seeks to chart a realistic pathway to ensure Indigenous arts success under an NT Indigenous arts advocacy and support framework. The challenge for the NT Government's IAS will be to develop a positive and achievable Indigenous arts policy umbrella that is warmly welcomed by the NT arts community and the NT constituency and that is regarded as valuable by other major Commonwealth funding agencies. This suggests, on one hand, that these other Commonwealth agencies are also stakeholders in the development of the IAS—it is in the Commonwealth's interests to seek to sustain a national Indigenous arts sector, and to ensure that the important NT component is sustainable by supporting it institutionally and financially. On the other hand, while it is in the NT Government's interest to form an effective alliance with the Commonwealth

because of its current financial dominance in the sector in the NT, both interests, as well as Indigenous arts stakeholders, will be well served by strong coordination.

Resolving such issues will require astute political judgments by the NT Government. The challenge for the development of the IAS is to seek to convert the undeniable current of NT Government goodwill, and broader Commonwealth concurrence (recently evident in the March 2003 CMC Communiqué), to a focus on Indigenous arts as a priority for positive policy action. How can the NT Government ensure that it enhances and maintains the national leadership in Indigenous arts, and especially visual arts, that the NT clearly enjoys? This, ultimately, must be the aim of the IAS.

Appendix 1. NT Indigenous Arts Strategy: Terms of Reference

Objective

To assess the current state of the Indigenous arts industry in the NT, survey stakeholders and provide recommendations for the NT Government to consider for future directions for a strategy for providing support to the sector.

Scope

The Review should examine existing information available on the sector, including written material and data collected by, or available from, relevant organisations and stakeholders. The Review will also involve circulation of a draft Issues Paper built on sector input and research, followed by discussion forums with key stakeholders to be held in Darwin and Alice Springs. An Options Discussion Paper will be prepared for government consideration regarding possible content of an Indigenous Arts Strategy.

The client (Arts NT) is to provide lists of key stakeholders and relevant documents.

The review/consultation process will be one which:

- assesses the benefits to the NT economy and for Australia from the Indigenous arts industry;
- recognises the need for a sustainable future for Indigenous artists in many regional contexts where alternative economic opportunities are scarce;
- recommends policy initiatives to best support the ongoing development of the Indigenous arts industries:
 - visual arts and crafts
 - performing arts, including theatre, music, dance
 - film, TV and new media
 - literature;
- makes an assessment of appropriate funding levels from all potential Government sources to ensure industry viability and sustainability;
- identifies ways of furthering whole of (NT) government approaches, and working within policy frameworks in the NT;
- identifies potential scope for innovative and collaborative approaches between the NT and Commonwealth funding agencies and sources;
- seeks to identify ways to maximise the effectiveness of Commonwealth industry support programs and University research funding; and
- identifies useful linkages between the arts industry and the tourism industry in the NT.

The final Options Discussion Paper will be based on recommendations that seek to maximise artistic outcomes for the Territory and that involve improved employment and training opportunities, economic and social returns to Indigenous artists and improved governance and social outcomes for their communities.

Timeline

- | | |
|----------|--|
| 14 March | Advertise for input to be provided by 31 March for incorporation into subsequent Issues Paper that highlights: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Issues/barriers to progress for Indigenous arts • Suggested changes that would assist progress |
| 17 April | Release of Issues Paper for stakeholder response by early May |
| 28 April | Discussion forum in Alice Springs with Government representatives and key industry stakeholders |

- 1 May Discussion forum in Darwin with Government representatives
 2 May Discussion forum in Darwin with key industry stakeholders
 31 May Presentation of Options Discussion Paper for government consideration.

Appendix 2. List of submissions

All those who made submission to the development of the Indigenous Arts Strategy were contacted and asked if they were willing to have their submission placed on the public record. Some stakeholders requested that their submissions remain confidential. Key themes have been drawn from almost all submissions in a generic way, with quoted material only being from publicly-available submissions.

| No. | Organisation | Comment |
|-----|--|-----------------------------------|
| 1. | Buku-Larrnggay Mulka Centre | Consult before quoting |
| 2. | Skinnyfish | |
| 3. | Music Industry Development Inc. | |
| 4. | Margie West | Confidential |
| 5. | NT Music School—NT Department of Employment, Education and Training (DEET) | |
| 6. | Maningrida Arts and Culture | |
| 7. | Tracks Inc. | |
| 8. | ArtsMARK | |
| 9. | Marrawuddi Gallery | Consult before quoting |
| 10. | Basil Hall Editions | |
| 11. | Department of Business, Industry and Resource Development | |
| 12. | Festival of Darwin | For public record |
| 13. | Batchelor Institute | For public record |
| 14. | Bulaʔbula Arts | |
| 15. | 24Hr Art | |
| 16. | Marketing Indigenous Performing Arts | |
| 17. | Central Australian Aboriginal Media Association Music | |
| 18. | Association of Northern, Kimberley and Arnhem Aboriginal Artists | Consult before quoting |
| 19. | NT Writers' Centre | |
| 20. | Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Performing Arts | Submission only for public record |
| 21. | Strehlow Research Centre | |
| 22. | Australian Film Commission—Indigenous Unit | |
| 23. | Tiwi Art Network | |
| 24. | Key Centre for Tropical Wildlife Management | |
| 25. | Artback NT Arts Touring | For public record |
| 26. | Corrugated Iron Youth Arts | |
| 27. | Desart | For public record |
| 28. | Andrish Saint-Clare | Confidential |
| 29. | DCDSCA | |
| 30. | Red Dust Theatre | |

| | | |
|-----|---------------|-------------------|
| 31. | ATSIC | For public record |
| 32. | Keringke Arts | For public record |

Appendix 3. Submission analysis

In a letter sent out on 14 March 2003, stakeholders were invited to ‘provide succinct submissions giving views and comments on the current state of the Indigenous arts sector in the Northern Territory and options for its future development’.

Stakeholders were asked to provide a summary, in one or two pages, focusing on:

- their activities—their nature, scale, and current support;
- a few key issues that they believe need to be addressed;
- perceived barriers to current and future development of Indigenous arts in the NT; and
- some innovative, but realistic, suggestions for changes that could benefit the sector, preferably prioritised.

In total 32 submissions were received (see listing below). Although some stakeholders have considerable overlap in their interests, they have been divided into groups depending on their primary arts sector focus: visual (V) and non-visual (NV). Several submissions have equal focus in both areas (B). It should be noted that some submissions provided very useful information but did not address our specific information requests.

The analysis here ranks responses received simply by documenting which issues were most commonly raised in submission. This quantification of stakeholder views does not include any assessment of the validity of these views.

1. Buku-Larrnggay Mulka Centre (V)
2. Skinnyfish (NV)
3. Music Industry Development Inc. (MIDI) (NV)
4. Margie West (V)
5. NT Music School—NT DEET (NV)
6. Maningrida Arts and Culture (MAC) (V)
7. Tracks Inc (NV)
8. ArtsMARK (V)
9. Marrawuddi (V)
10. Basil Hall Editions (V)
11. Department of Business, Industry and Resource Development (DBIRD) (V)
12. Festival of Darwin (NV)
13. Batchelor Institute (V)
14. Bula'bula Arts (V)
15. 24Hr Art (V)
16. Marketing Indigenous Performing Arts (MIPA) (NV)
17. Central Australian Aboriginal Media Association (CAAMA) Music (NV)
18. Association of Northern, Kimberley and Arnhem Aboriginal Artists (ANKAAA) (V)
19. NT Writers' Centre (NV)
20. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Performing Arts (ATSIPA) (NV)
21. Strehlow Research Centre (V)
22. Australian Film Commission—Indigenous unit (AFC) (NV)
23. Tiwi Art Network (V)
24. Key Centre for Tropical Wildlife Management (KCTWM) (V)

25. Artback NT Arts Touring (B)
26. Corrugated Iron Youth Arts (NV)
27. Desart (V)
28. Andrish Saint-Clare (NV)
29. DCDSCA-Local Government and Regional Development Division (B)
30. Red Dust Theatre (NV)
31. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Commission (ATSIC) (B)
32. Keringke Arts (V)

Key issues/concerns emerging from visual arts submissions (most relate to art centres)

Human resourcing issues

- Need for increased training opportunities, both for art centre staff and art producers (artsMARK, MAC, Margie West, ANKAAA, 24Hr Art, Bula'bula, Tiwi, Desart, Keringke)
- Isolation and lack of information flows between organisations, etc (24Hr Art, Bula'bula, ANKAAA, Tiwi, Desart, ATSIC)
- More staff needed in regional and remote areas (Batchelor, Margie West, ANKAAA, Basil Hall, Tiwi, ATSIC)
- Need for art centres to attract quality staff with diverse skills (Buku-Larrnggay Mulka Centre, Bula'bula, MAC, ANKAAA)
- Staff retention rates (Margie West, Bula'bula, Basil Hall, Tiwi)
- Unscrupulous operators (Bula'bula, Strehlow)
- Need to increase awareness about exporting opportunities (DBIRD)
- High turnover of ATSIC staff and loss of corporate memory in relation to art centres (ANKAAA)

Funding issues

- Art centres pressured to reduce costs/funded as economic businesses not cultural businesses (Buku-Larrnggay Mulka Centre, Bula'bula, ANKAAA, Tiwi, Desart)
- Need for marketing support for art centres/artists (DBIRD, MAC, artsMARK, Desart, ATSIC)
- NACISS issues, inequitable funding models (MAC, Margie West, ANKAAA, Bula'bula, Desart)
- Need funding for training (MAC, Batchelor, Bula'bula)
- Greater returns to artists and resale royalties (Bula'bula, Strehlow)
- Increase travel budgets for exhibitions, etc (Tiwi, 24Hr Art)

Other issues

- Sustainability: ecological/cultural/economic (Bula'bula, Batchelor, KCTWM, Tiwi, ATSIC)
- Authenticity and IP issues (DBIRD, Bula'bula, MAC, Desart, ATSIC)
- State jurisdiction issues (artsMARK, Batchelor, ANKAAA)
- Infrastructure and IT issues (24Hr Art, Strehlow)
- Tourism linkages (Buku-Larrnggay Mulka Centre)

- Goods and Services Tax issues (Buku-Larrnggay Mulka Centre)
- Staff/visitor accommodation issues (Buku-Larrnggay Mulka Centre)

Key suggestions for change in visual arts submissions

- Support strategic planning and marketing initiatives, especially using the internet, e-tailing etc (Tiwi, Desart, Strehlow, 24HR Art, MAC, artsMARK, Buku-Larrnggay Mulka, DBIRD, DCDSCA)
- Support professional development/training/residency programs for Indigenous artists and arts workers (Tiwi, Desart, 24HR Art, MAC, artsMARK, Buku-Larrnggay Mulka, DCDSCA, Keringke)
- More workers in remote areas and/or regional support positions/HR officer for art centres/ANKAAA and Desart (Tiwi, Batchelor, Margie West, Basil Hall, ANKAAA, MAC, ATSIC)
- Promote Indigenous arts profile/hold an annual Indigenous art sale (Bula'bula, MAC, artsMARK, DBIRD, ATSIC, DCDSCA)
- Greater cooperation/communication between arts organisations with others e.g. tourism agencies (Basil Hall, 24HR Art, MAC, DBIRD)
- Increase travel budgets for professional development (Tiwi, 24HR Art)
- Particular need for staff and funds in Katherine region (ANKAAA, Batchelor)
- Greater cross-border cooperation at State/ Territory level (Batchelor, artsMARK)
- Recognition of economic value of the Indigenous arts (Desart, Buku-Larrnggay Mulka)
- Development of cross-cultural arts management training initiatives (Margie West, Basil Hall)
- Recognise broader funding environment and review the efficacy of NACISS (Desart, MAC)
- Development of official guidelines or authorised dealer licences for remote areas (Strehlow, MAC)
- NT funding initiatives such as funnelling a percentage of lottery funds, or a tax on gaming machines, etc. (Margie West)
- Tax incentives, e.g. for the natural resources industry that targets investment in Indigenous art (Desart)
- Conduct statistical research of the sector (Desart)
- Development of a resale royalty regime (Strehlow)
- Raise awareness of exporting (DBIRD)
- Improve art centre recording of native species utilisation to monitor use and ensure adequate community access to native species (KCTWM)
- Review regulatory policies that might unnecessarily hamper current sustainable use of wildlife in arts production and strengthen mechanisms to address illegal and unsustainable practice (KCTWM)

Key issues/concerns emerging from non-visual arts submissions

Human resourcing issues

- Lack of follow-up strategies once training has been delivered/lack of employment opportunities for performers (ATSIPA, CAAMA, MIPA, MIDI, Artback, Corrugated Iron)
- Lack of coordinated approach between organisations (ATSIPA, MIPA, MIDI, Artback, Corrugated Iron)
- Lack of training facilities (ATSIPA, Festival of Darwin, MIDI, Corrugated Iron)

- Talent leakage to other States/interstate companies accessing NT performers without 'putting back' (ATSIPA)
- Lack of staff (NT Writers' Centre)

Funding issues

- Funding insecurity (ATSIPA, CAAMA, MIPA, Artback, Corrugated Iron, Red Dust Theatre)
- Difficulty/cost of training in remote communities/touring to greater markets (ATSIPA, Skinnyfish, MIDI, Artback)
- ATSIC's policy not to fund performing arts/inappropriate split of funding categories (ATSIPA, Artback)
- Uncertainty about funds available and their purpose (ATSIPA)
- Increase travel budgets for performers (ATSIPA)

Other issues

- No Indigenous performing arts company (ATSIPA, MIPA, Festival of Darwin, Artback, Corrugated Iron, ATSIC)
- Lack of infrastructure support (CAAMA, Skinnyfish, NT Writers' Centre, MIDI, Artback)
- Lack of appropriate venues (Skinnyfish, CAAMA, MIDI, Artback)
- Export development assistance (CAAMA, Festival of Darwin, MIDI)
- Potential for tourism linkages (CAAMA, Skinnyfish, MIDI)
- Need for an Indigenous music/performance event in NT (Skinnyfish, MIDI)
- Sustainability (MIPA, Andrish Saint-Clare)

Key suggestions for change in non-visual arts submissions

- Recognition of economic and other value of the Indigenous non-visual arts (Skinnyfish, MIDI, Festival of Darwin, CAAMA, ATSIPA, Artback, MIPA, Red Dust Theatre)
- Greater cooperation/communication between arts and other organisations, e.g. tourism to establish an Indigenous arts network (Artback, ATSIPA, Corrugated Iron, Festival of Darwin, MIPA, Skinnyfish, CAAMA, ATSIC)
- Identify appropriate ongoing (and quality assured) training and employment model/s, i.e. professional development (ATSIPA, Corrugated Iron, MIDI, Festival of Darwin, MIPA)
- Develop an Indigenous performing arts/dance/music company (Corrugated Iron, MIPA, Festival of Darwin, ATSIC, DCDSCA)
- Schools/communities mentorship program (Corrugated Iron, Indigenous Education Division (DEET), Festival of Darwin)
- Develop a large scale NT Indigenous music event and/or music awards (MIDI, Skinnyfish, DCDSCA)
- Funding to be structured over a period of time to gain measurable results (Artback, ATSIPA, MIPA)
- Clearer identification of what funds are available and for what purposes (ATSIPA, MIPA)
- Develop art centre style model for performing arts (Artback, ATSIPA)
- Follow-up strategies in communities to ensure performing arts activities continue contingent on community support (ATSIPA, AFC)
- Small grants/expanded facilities for bands to make recordings (CAAMA, MIDI)
- Enhance human resourcing, e.g. an Indigenous Project Officer (NT Writer's Centre, Skinnyfish)

- Outdoor performance facility (Artback, MIDI)
- Artist accommodation in Darwin (Artback)
- Enhanced access to infrastructure, IT etc (Artback)
- Develop touring routes for bands through the NT and across borders (Skinnyfish)
- Ensure access to export initiatives (CAAMA)

Notes

1. This is occurring at present through the operations of an Indigenous art centres working group comprising officials from ATSIC, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Arts Board and Department of Communications, Information Technology and the Arts (DCITA).
2. The heightened profile of this issue with ACCC can be seen with its recent legal action launched against Australia's largest manufacturer of Aboriginal-style souvenirs. Interim orders handed down by the Federal Court on 4 April 2002 prevent the company, Australian Icons, from describing its range of merchandise as 'Aboriginal art' or 'authentic' if it was not created by an Aboriginal person. See 'ACCC Obtains Interim Orders Against Aboriginal-Style Souvenir Dealer' <<http://www.accc.gov.au>>.
3. For some of this early history see Altman (1988, 2000c) and Altman & Taylor (2000).
4. In particular see Wright (1999, 2000), Wright & Morphy (2000); also see Altman (1989) and Mercer (1997).
5. In the NT, there is a concentration of Indigenous art centres and member visual art practitioners in the Top End and Central Australia—see map in Wright (2000).
6. This is very evident with respect to the visual arts throughout Australia in the Myer Report (2002) and is also recognised by the CMC establishment of a Statistical Working Group and a research project to attempt to estimate the value of Indigenous art and hand-craft in Australia. See also a report by Hoegh-Guldberg (2002) to DCITA.
7. Financial sustainability, as we shall see below, has been predicated on the need for ongoing subsidy of the Indigenous arts industry, something that is not unusual in the arts sector.
8. For program, papers and speeches see <<http://www.indigenousforums.nt.gov.au/>>
9. See Media Release, Cultural Ministers Council 16th Meeting 28 March 2003.
10. See ATSIC Review available online at: <<http://www.atsicreview.gov.au>>
11. Information provided to CAEPR in 2002.
12. To assist regional and remote organisations with the application process, Visions of Australia encourages all applicants to discuss their proposals with the Secretariat and/or Committee members. Changes to the program are currently being considered and should further assist small/medium, regional and remote organisations, such as those in the NT, to access support.
13. Note that this is the wider cultural, not the narrower arts, funding.
14. However, prominent NT Indigenous artists participate in arts activity on a national and international basis with private and philanthropic support.
15. And such art centres also operate as GST tax collectors for the Australian Taxation Office, tax contributions that can go a long way to offset their operational subsidies.
16. A problem discussed elsewhere (see Altman 2000a; ANKAAA 2003) is that for the last decade, while the consumer price index has increased by about 26%, the NACISS allocation has stayed fixed. This makes it difficult for new art centres to be established and to receive ongoing operational support.
17. The very presence of Indigenous art in commercial outlets and tourist centres in the NT adds enormously to the distinct ambience of the NT as a tourist destination.

18. 7,672,000 international and interstate visitor nights in 2001–02 divided by 365 provides 21,019 notional NT residents, assuming no holidays are taken interstate or overseas.
19. This is not to deny that the manufactured tourist art sector is of significant value, and probably exceeds the total value of the hand-crafted arts and crafts. The potential for the creation of strategic partnerships with manufacturers of licenced products that could earn significant reproduction fees for some artists should not be under-estimated.

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