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This book follows a similar publication in 1998, *The Great Yarn Event and Other Arts Stories from Regional Australia*.
Cover image: Mallacoota's Easter Festival 1997, *Sunset Ritual*, Betka Beach Lagoon, artist: Catherine Larkins, photo: Lindy Bartholomew.



Heartwork

Great arts stories from regional Australia

Foreword Nicola Downer

President, Regional Arts Australia



Regional Australia is a vast and diverse landscape of people and communities with many stories to tell. The arts in regional Australia play an important role in telling these stories.

Heartwork: great arts stories from regional Australia showcases 35 arts projects from

across regional Australia, highlighting the quality and scope of artistic activity occurring beyond the major metropolitan centres.

This is Regional Arts Australia's second publication in partnership with the Australia Council. Its predecessor was published in 1998, *The Great Yarn Event and Other Arts Stories from Regional Australia*, which was a huge success in raising the awareness of the arts in regional communities.

Since 1998 many changes have taken place in the arts across regional Australia, including changes to funding arrangements so that more people are receiving arts funding that is delivered and administered at a local level.

There is a new enthusiasm for projects that revitalise communities through collaborative processes and celebrations. More projects/programs have greater emphasis on leaving skills and resources in communities so they can further their own arts activities. Many of the projects occurring now are larger in scale, involve more people, draw on new audiences and have specific outcomes for the participants.

Regional communities have used their respective strengths, most notably committed and passionate local arts volunteers, to ensure collaborative and cooperative approaches to the development of projects and the community recognition of these arts projects.

Regional Arts Australia works tirelessly to promote opportunities for regional communities to access and participate in the arts. We recognise how crucial the arts are to community development generally and the role that the arts plays in building community pride and regional distinctiveness.

During my tenure as president I have always been impressed by what can and what has been achieved when local communities share their vision and build arts projects and programs, which not only make them proud, but leave skills in the community for the benefit of future generations. The publication *Heartwork* clearly demonstrates the importance of the arts in regional Australia for communities

working together to build confidence, and develop new opportunities for themselves.

I commend *Heartwork* to you. I have no doubt that you will be both impressed and inspired by the commitment and energy of regional communities across Australia in demonstrating to us all that the arts can and do make a difference.

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Nicola Downer". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Nicola Downer
President, Regional Arts Australia

Foreword Jennifer Bott

CEO, Australia Council



This publication is proof that the cultural landscape of regional Australia is now even richer since *The Great Yarn Event* was published in 1998.

Heartwork celebrates and profiles the great talent and achievements of regional and remote artists in Australia. Regional creators are pursuing

more complex, challenging and sophisticated projects. Partnerships, multiple artforms, Internet technology and complex organisation over distances and time are all part of the mix. The dialogue includes city and rural exchange—going both ways—and a heartening involvement of young people, who often face difficult challenges as the regional economy changes. And the range here is from the backyard to, in some instances, the international stage.

Heartwork is aimed at a broad audience. It is intended to provide models, inspiration and ideas. It sends a clear message that artists can thrive in regional Australia. For audiences: there is no lack of excellent art out there, and you can be a spectator, or better still, you can participate too. And I'm sure city dwellers who read this publication will find a new motivation for packing their bags and heading to the country—they will be rewarded by a cultural experience probably unlike any they have had before.

Volunteers, community groups, local governments and many others have worked for years to create a rich cultural life in regional Australia, with or without government funding. The Australia Council has continued to pursue its regional arts development policy and has been pleased to join forces with Regional Arts Australia to achieve our common goals. Undoubtedly a vital factor driving the growth of regional arts over recent years has been the increased funding and strategic focus that government agencies have given to regional arts.

However, this is not the time to rest. Ensuring a sustainable future for regional and remote artists remains a challenge. The Australia Council recognises the tremendous efforts that organisations, governments and individuals have

already made. We will continue to push for all levels of government to work together and support the arts right across Australia. Regional and remote communities are reaping the benefits of a rich cultural life and they should continue to do so.

A handwritten signature in gold ink that reads "Jennifer Bott". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name being larger and more prominent.

Jennifer Bott
CEO, Australia Council

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