

# **CONTRIBUTING TO RESILIENT LOCAL ECONOMIES**

---

**THE ARTS RIPPLE EFFECT**  
**VALUING THE ARTS IN COMMUNITIES**



# CONTRIBUTING TO RESILIENT LOCAL ECONOMIES

---

At a macro level there has been much discussion about the rise of the creative class and the capacity to transform a city's fortune through investment in creative capital. This thinking reflects an understanding that the skills associated with artistic practices – creative thinking, self-discipline, collaboration, risk taking, and innovation – are skills that are in great demand in our contemporary knowledge economy.<sup>35</sup>

Investment in cultural infrastructure and events contributes to local economies by providing a focal point to attract tourist dollars and help promote a city's image as a cultural destination and by attracting highly skilled and educated workers to communities.<sup>36</sup>

A recent study into the economic impact of the Victorian arts and cultural sector illustrates the ripple effects of investing in local creative industries.<sup>37</sup> Museum Victoria worked with small to medium business in Melbourne to develop interactive displays for exhibitions. The multimedia and interactive components of the touring exhibition have subsequently been purchased for use by other museums around the world, demonstrating how local investment can result in valuable exports.<sup>38</sup>

Involvement in arts-based activities has been shown to create pathways for personal and social development which increase prospects for employability,<sup>39</sup> particularly for young people and those from culturally diverse or disadvantaged backgrounds.

*“...people may learn new skills and feel more confident as the result of participating in community arts activity, and this, in turn, may increase their employability.”<sup>40</sup>*

Arts businesses frequently operate within a model of social enterprise which contribute to local economies by gradually building capacity; developing pathways to the open labour market through traineeships; work experience placements and volunteering opportunities.

---

<sup>35</sup> Lynch R L. (2008). 'Creating a Brighter Workforce With the Arts: The Skills Taught by the Arts Will Contribute to Success in the Knowledge-based Economy of the 21st Century.' *School Administrator* (USA). March 2008, Number 3, Vol 65, p 26–28.

<sup>36</sup> Jeannotte S M. (2008). *Shared spaces: social and economic returns on investment in cultural infrastructure*. Canada: Centre on Governance, University of Ottawa.

<sup>37</sup> KPMG. (2013). *Economic Impact of the Victorian Arts and Cultural Sector*. Melbourne, p 14.

<sup>38</sup> *Ibid*, p 14.

<sup>39</sup> Long J, Welch M, Bramham P, Butterfield J, Hylton K & Lloyd E. (2002). *Count Me In: The Dimensions of Social Inclusion Through Culture, Media & Sport*. UK: Department for Culture, Media & Sport.

<sup>40</sup> Jermyn H. (2001). *Arts and Social Exclusion: a Review Prepared for the Arts Council of England*. UK: Arts Council England.

## CREATING GROWTH: WANGARATTA PERFORMING ARTS CENTRE



John McAll (piano), Gregory Porter (vocalist), Zvi Belling (bass), Danny Farrugia (drums) and Nick Lester (saxophone) entertain a full house at WPAC for the Wangaratta Festival of Jazz and Blues (2012) Source: Noisebox Productions /WPAC

The **Wangaratta Performing Arts Centre** opened in 2009, with a construction cost of \$8.5 million and provides a professional performing arts facility. It replaced the Wangaratta Memorial Town Hall which had very limited facilities for presenting professional performing arts.

An economic impact assessment of the centre found it has generated significant additional economic activity in the region. Regional visitation has increased by approximately 5,200 persons per year associated with arts performances, conferences and events. As a consequence, regional visitor spending has increased by around \$1.6 million (direct and indirect) per year, benefiting a wide range of regional businesses. The capital cost of the new centre will have been repaid, from additional economic activity in the region at the end of 2014, which is just over five years after completion.<sup>41</sup>

The increased economic activity has resulted in additional employment of 19.5 equivalent full-time staff, including 2.75 directly associated with the facility, and the balance involved indirectly through suppliers, visitor spending etc.

The study also identified a significant increase in volunteer levels (in comparison with the old venue) with volunteer hours increasing over tenfold from the predevelopment situation, generating the equivalent of \$28,000 in wages.<sup>42</sup>

A number of important non-quantifiable economic benefits associated with the **Wangaratta Performing Arts Centre** were also identified, including improved patronage to the broader arts precinct, with the Wangaratta Art Gallery in particular experiencing a considerable increase in attendance.

<sup>41</sup> Essential Economics Pty Ltd. (2013). *Wangaratta Performing Arts Centre, Economic Impact Assessment, Final Report*. p 1. Available at [www.arts.vic.gov.au/Research\\_and\\_Resources/Evaluation\\_Reports](http://www.arts.vic.gov.au/Research_and_Resources/Evaluation_Reports)

<sup>42</sup> Ibid, p 3.

## CASE STUDY: THE AFGHAN TEA CYCLE

Research indicates that many refugees face barriers to language and employment in their settlement to a new country,<sup>43</sup> the **Afghan Tea Cycle** offers Afghan born residents an opportunity to build on social engagement skills, cultural identity, pride, English language skills and professional development in the area of hospitality.

The **Afghan Tea Cycle** captures an integral part of Afghan culture through the preparation and service of traditional Afghan Tea. The project demonstrates how an arts-led process can become an exemplar of cultural exchange and street activation, while also providing an employment opportunity for existing and emerging communities.

The project grew out of an exploration of the diverse aspects of art in public space and was created by Afghan artist Aslam Akram and fellow artist Ceri Hann, in a collaboration between City of Greater Dandenong Council and RMIT University. Interdisciplinary and intercultural practice has been a feature of this collaboration which has combined engineering, small business and fine art.



The Afghan Tea Cycle (2010) Photo: Jason Edwards

The **Afghan Tea Cycle** also acts as a social enterprise initiative by providing an employment platform for Afghan born refugees and migrants that extend the Afghan Bazaar experience of hospitality and generosity beyond the precinct's immediate vicinity.

Operators of the cycle undergo training and are registered with a Dandenong based catering employment agency which ensures that all standard employment requirements are met. Operating the cycle requires a range of hospitality skills, like customer service, public speaking and time management which enhance and contribute to the operators professional and personal development. The **Afghan Tea Cycle** has been hired on more than 60 occasions since 2010. The **Afghan Tea Cycle** contributes to intercultural exchange and encourages culturally inclusive practices whilst promoting Afghan culture. It has employed 10 Afghan born operators. Many of the Afghan Tea Cycle operators have gone on to full time employment and further education.

*"The Afghan Tea Cycle was great as a welcome and to break the atmosphere of lots of Afghan dignitaries meeting with media."*  
(Melbourne Museum)

<sup>43</sup> Refugee Council of Australia. (2010). *What Works: Employment strategies for refugee and humanitarian entrants*. Accessed 4 February 2014. Available at <https://www.refugeecouncil.org.au/r/rpt/2010-Employment.pdf>

The **Afghan Tea Cycle** is available for hire for festivals and events and offers a minimum 3 hours traditional Afghan tea service accompanied by sweet favours all prepared by an Afghan tea operator. By supplying an authentic Afghan tea experience, and in the process, promoting Afghan

culture through social practice and aesthetic impact, the **Afghan Tea Cycle** contributes to intercultural exchange and encourages inclusive practices that can be shared beyond the Afghan Bazaar in Dandenong, at events, festivals and private functions.



*The Afghan Tea Cycle (2010) Photo: Jason Edwards*

**"Involvement in arts-based activities has been shown to create pathways for personal and social development which increase prospects for employability"**

Long J, Welch M, Bramham P, Butterfield J, Hylton K & Lloyd E. (2002). *Count Me In: The Dimensions of Social Inclusion Through Culture, Media & Sport*. UK: Department for Culture, Media & Sport.