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24 July 2014

The Hon. Jay Weatherill MP  
Premier of South Australia  
Office of the Premier  
GPO Box 2343  
ADELAIDE SA 5001

**Incorporating**  
Chaffey Theatre  
Middleback Theatre  
Whyalla Cinema  
Northern Festival Centre  
Sir Robert Helpmann Theatre  
Arts funding programs  
Performing arts touring  
Visual arts touring  
New Land Gallery  
Riverlands Gallery

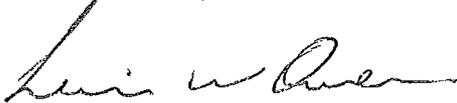
Dear Premier

Thank you for your letter of 8 July 2014 concerning the review of Boards and Committees.

Attached is a copy of the Country Arts SA response to the Minister for the Arts.

Thank you for the opportunity to contribute to your review.

Yours sincerely



Lewis W Owens  
Chair  
Country Arts SA

24 July 2014

The Hon. Jack Snelling MP  
Minister for the Arts  
GPO Box 2555  
ADELAIDE SA 5001

COPY

Dear Minister

I refer to the recent letter from the Premier regarding the Government's decision to review the need for all boards and committees under public sector control, and seeking comment from Chairs of such bodies on the approach. A copy of this letter has been forwarded to the Premier for his information.

The Board (Trust) of Country Arts SA fully supports reviewing the need for individual Boards and their governance arrangements to ensure they remain relevant and appropriate.

The South Australian Country Arts Trust was established under the *South Australian Country Arts Trust Act 1993* to:

- (a) advise the Minister on matters of policy related to country arts;
- (b) act as an advocate for country arts;
- (c) manage the development of country arts;
- (d) establish and maintain an information service for country arts;
- (e) develop and manage programs for the touring of country arts activities
- (f) provide, manage and control premises and facilities for country arts;
- (g) evaluate and be responsible for the financial and artistic performance of country arts activities funded by the Trust; and
- (h) provide ticketing services for productions or events of any kind staged or promoted by the Trust or any other person; and
- (i) carry out any other functions assigned to the Trust under this or any other Act or by the Minister.

The Trust replaced four regional Trusts when it was established, part of a process at that time of consolidating responsibility and improving the efficiency and governance of arts bodies across the State. We have continued to review our operating arrangements each year to ensure we remain the most efficient and effective way of delivering arts services to regional South Australians.

The Board is made up of nine ministerially appointed "Trustees", five of which represent proclaimed regions, one is nominated by the Local Government Association, and the remaining three are appointed on the basis of skills required by the Board. This is a very effective way of ensuring regional input and ownership, while at the same time guaranteeing access to the wide range of skills necessary to provide the oversight and governance of a complex business with significant annual expenditures.

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The Board believes it is both efficient and effective in providing strong governance to the organisation, guiding its strategies and direction, and undertaking the scrutiny of its operations, such that the Minister can focus on policy initiatives without needing to undertake detailed oversight of programs and expenditures.

Country Arts SA employs approximately 60 fte staff and has an annual turnover of approximately \$12 million. It is a complex organisation, managing five performing arts centres across regional South Australia and collaborating with numerous partners to provide programs and arts opportunities for regional South Australians, who would otherwise have little or no access to the arts or cultural activities.

Whilst Country Arts SA actively engages with regional communities to help shape its arts programs (thus ensuring their ongoing relevance to those communities through regionally based staff, reference groups and other consultative mechanisms), the local knowledge and skills brought to the Board by its appointed members are considered invaluable in ensuring sound decision making and equitable distribution of limited Country Arts SA resources across the state.

Board operations are streamlined to ensure maximum efficiency. The Board meets on 6 occasions each year, and one-third of the meetings are held in regional communities, ensuring it remains in touch with issues affecting regional communities. The Governance and Finance Committee consisting of four Board members and senior management meet on four occasions each year to oversee the financial performance of the organisation and provide assurance to the Board that it is meeting all its statutory compliance obligations.

The Grants Assessment Panel meets on two occasions each year and currently consists of 12 community representatives (peers) who are appointed by the Minister for the Arts and is chaired by a member of the Board. The primary purpose of the panel is to assess applications to the Regional Arts Fund, a program of the Federal Government through the Ministry for the Arts, valued at approximately \$300,000 each year. An independent, representative panel is a requirement of the Federal Government. At each meeting, following the grant assessments, including the assessment of two other smaller Country Arts SA grant programs, the panel considers regional arts issues and is able to provide further advice to the Board.

The total cost of Board and Committee operations is approximately \$70,000 per annum including travel costs, and represents very good value for Country Arts SA given the vast range of skills and local regional knowledge these individuals bring to the organisation. This would also be well below the cost of employing senior experienced staff to undertake the independent scrutiny and challenge the complex arts, regional and governance issues associated with our business.

It provides a focus on regional programs and expenditure that may be overlooked if located in a Statewide agency.

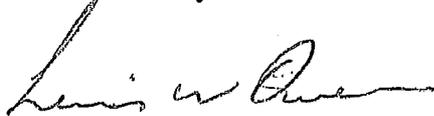
An intangible benefit of the Board is the extensive network that the Directors have access to which provide further opportunities for Country Arts SA to collaborate with other arts and non-arts organisations in sourcing alternative funding for its operations and the delivery of its arts programs that may otherwise have not been possible.

As a statutory authority, Country Arts SA is able to access grant funding from funding bodies such as the Australia Council for the Arts, Australian Ministry for the Arts, Ian Potter Foundation, Regional Development Australia and Creative Partnerships Australia which would not be possible if the organisation was simply a part of Arts SA. There is a clear financial advantage to Country Arts of being seen as an independent authority rather than a Government Department, and has resulted in a disproportionate share of Commonwealth funds being secured for Arts programs in South Australia. It has also meant we have been able to enter into partnerships and other collaborations with Local Government, welfare agencies and private sponsors as we are seen to have the necessary independence from Government, but also access to the widespread support from the Department for the Arts and the State Government in general.

For these reasons I believe that regional South Australia and the Minister, and the State Government in general, have benefited enormously from the statutory authority structure implemented in 1993 and from the skills and knowledge contributed by its Board members over the 21 years of operation. The costs of maintaining this strong system of governance are far out-weighed by the benefits that have been delivered to regional South Australia. As such, I strongly recommend that the Country Arts SA Board and its committees be maintained into the future.

Thank you for giving us the opportunity to input into this review. Should you require any further information or clarification, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Yours sincerely



Lewis W Owens  
Chair  
Country Arts SA

cc: The Hon. Jay Wetherill, Premier of South Australia

cc: Alexandra Reid, Executive Director Arts SA