





Community and Arts

Arts beyond the pandemic The nandemic has highlighten to

The pandemic has highlighted the plight of the arts sector but will the support continue?



Madeleine Stephens madeleine.stephens@businessnews.com.au

6-PAGE FEATURE

The financial hit for me was losing opportunities

- Abdul-Rahman Abdullah

lthough
a wave of
COVID19 relief funding is
keeping arts organisations afloat, the next few
years could be telling for the
sector.

Faced with a recession, government stimulus expiry dates, an expected reduction in corporate support and general uncertainty surrounding the pandemic, the arts sector must traverse a lengthy road to recovery.

Given the prevalence of casual and contract work in the sector, the halting of performances, gallery closures and film set shutdowns have heavily impacted independent artists.

A report compiled by the Chamber of Arts and Culture

WA, titled Arts and Culture Economic Recovery Plan, reported there were around 10,000 creative businesses in WA and 60 per cent, or about 6,000, were sole traders.

According to the report, independent and emerging artists were disproportionately affected by the pandemic because of a lack of access to JobKeeper, the likelihood they did not have ongoing project funding, the reduction in available contract roles and the fact that most had fewer personal resources.

Western Australian visual artist and Perth Institute of Contemporary Arts board member Abdul-Rahman Abdullah said he had been fortunate to receive grants during the shutdown period and had sold pieces before COVID-19 hit. Others weren't so lucky.

"In that sense, I've been quite lucky, but I am also well aware that these funding rounds, it's often less than 10 per cent of these applications get funded," Mr Abdullah told Business News.

A renowned artist working primarily in sculpture and installation, Mr Abdullah has previously attended art shows across Australia and New Zealand to show his work.

"The financial hit for me was losing opportunities," he said.

"It's very hard to sell work that I'm not showing."

Going forward, Mr Abdullah said there would be a lot fewer visual artists able to participate in the sector because there would be fewer opportunities.

"The whole industry will shrink, I think, in a way we might not be able to feel," he said.

"It's going to be a lot more competitive and a lot of people will fall through the cracks.

"It's a scary thing to think about."

COMPETITION: Abdul-Rahman Abdullah says there will be fewer visual artists able to participate in the sector. Photo: Tarsh Photography

Arts state and federal COVID-19 relief funding snapshot

How much?	What's it for?	From who?					
About \$10 million	COVID-19 Relief Fund 2020/21: Building community programs	Lotterywest Lotterywest Lotterywest					
Share of \$10 million (arts and culture one of four streams)	COVID-19 Relief Fund 2020/21: Strengthening and adapting organisations						
\$8 million	Resilient arts organisations						
\$5 million	Event cancellation relief						
>\$3 million	Rent relief for funded organisations	Department of Local Government, Sport and Cultural Industries					
\$2.5 million	Screen Industry Sustainability package to fund activities for the next six months	Screenwest					
\$1.5 million	Aboriginal arts centres and visual artists featured in the State Art Collection	Foundation of the Art Gallery of Western Australia Regional Arts WA Department of Local Government, Sport and Cultural Industries					
\$1 million	Regional Arts Resilience Grants						
\$195,000	Regional art galleries which have had to close						
\$90 million	Concessional loans to assist new productions and events	Department of Infrastructure, Transport, Regional Development and Communications					
\$75 million	Grant funding for performing arts events	Department of Infrastructure, Transport, Regional Development and Communications					
\$50 million	Local film and TV production	Screen Australia					
\$35 million	Financial assistance to support significant Commonwealth- funded organisations	Australia Council					
\$10 million	Regional and remote organisations	Department of Infrastructure, Transport, Regional Development and Communications					
\$10 million	Support Act for mental health and crisis support	Department of Infrastructure, Transport, Regional Development and Communications					
\$7 million	Indigenous Art Centres	Department of Infrastructure, Transport, Regional Development and Communications					
\$5 million	2020 Resilience Fund for emergency relief	Australia Council					
\$500,000	First Nations arts and culture organisations	Australia Council					

Co3 Australia executive director Alana Culverhouse said organisations in vulnerable positions before the pandemic were in strife.

"If the companies ... are only just scraping through now, I'm concerned about their ability to continue to trade over the coming two years," Ms Culverhouse told *Business News*.

"Sydney Theatre Company and Carriageworks are in strife but they had been reporting quite big losses on their balance sheets prior so I think COVID is really highlighting that."

Co3 was launched in 2015 after the amalgamation of Buzz Dance Theatre and STEPS Youth Dance Company.

Ms Culverhouse said Co3 was performing better from a financial perspective than expected and was in the midst of developing a plan to ensure it could survive even tougher economic conditions.

"We have finished the year in not as bad a situation as we had anticipated," Ms Culverhouse told Business News.

Cancelled shows and the cost savings that come with that, coupled with the opportunity of increased funding and stimulus packages from government, had helped, she said.

Co3 received \$183,683 from Lotterywest under the event

cancellation relief fund, and sector support for resilient organisations, along with JobKeeper.

Ms Culverhouse said the additional funds had enabled the company to keep all office staff working their full hours and to keep five full-time dancers employed. All of this had been achieved while building up the company's reserves.

"We have done that as a deliberate measure to basically squirrel away our nuts because it's the next two years that are actually going to have the most impact, when the government stimulus packages dry up, our funding will remain static, at best, and sponsorships will get more difficult to secure," Ms Culverhouse said.

"We are really trying to put the company in a stronger financial position now to enable us to weather the next wave of economic downturn that's going to come out after this."

However, Ms Culverhouse said relying on reserves may create problems because it could stop the company from taking risks in its program.

"This is also something I am a bit concerned about because we are a contemporary dance company and, inherently, our work is new, it is risky," she said.

"So what does that mean in two years' time when our reserves are really low? "I'm just wondering about the quality of artwork that could be presented, not just by us but by the whole sector."

Funding

Short-term relief funding from Lotterywest and the Australia Council for the Arts has been well-received by the sector, keeping many organisations operating.

Analysis by Business News shows 64 WA arts sector organisations have so far shared \$6.7 million in funding from Lotterywest and \$362,634 in grants from the Australia Council for the Arts.

However, the Chamber of Arts and Culture WA report found the most significant issue in the recovery stages would be the unpredictability of multi-year funding administered by the Department of Local Government, Sport and Cultural Industries.

"The last three years has seen volatility, with this funding fluctuating from a low of \$15 million in 2016/17 to \$18 million in 18/19," the report read.

"The impact of this variance of up to 20 per cent has been significant and hampered consistent policy and funding delivery by the department."

According to the report, the fluctuating funding has



VALUE: Rick Heath says the pandemic has highlighted the importance and fragility of the arts sector. **Photo: Gabriel Oliveira**

... there's a kind of heightened consideration, or at least an awareness, of the performing arts

- Rick Heath

increased the fragility of the sector and hindered the development of emerging and diverse practitioners who would bring innovative thinking.

"Should the next three years see another phase of reduced funding to the department, it will be unable to be responsive to the prolonged effects of COVID-19 and provide the ongoing support that the recovery will need," the report said.

"We urge the government to review this policy and provide stabilisation to the department through consolidated revenue."

Donations and ticket sales

In addition to state relief funding, Black Swan State Theatre Company of WA executive director Rick Heath said donor support had increased.

He said the pandemic had highlighted both the importance and fragility of the arts sector.

"There's this genuine sentiment that there's a kind of heightened consideration, or at least an awareness, of the performing arts," Mr Heath told Business News.

This had translated into \$53,000 from people donating the cost of their tickets to the company, and an end-of-financial-year campaign that doubled its target and raised 500 per cent more than last year's campaign.

Mr Heath said this had further bolstered Black Swan's already strong financial position.

West Australian Ballet also had an impressive end to the year, raising \$275,000-35 per cent more than last year.

Barking Gecko Theatre had its most successful end-of-financialyear fundraising campaign in recent years, raising \$22,585.

The campaign, called \$20 for 2020, focused on attracting small donations from a wide range of donors to help kickstart the company's philanthropy program.

While Mr Heath said it was great to have such support, he wasn't sure how long it would last.

According to Business News Data & Insights, corporate

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RECOVERY: Bourby Webster says tickets to Perth Symphony Orchestra's upcoming show need to sell well. **Photo: Gabriel Oliveira**

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sponsorship for the 20 largest arts and culture organisations jumped from \$24.4 million in 2017-18, to \$30.1 million in 2018-19, before falling back to \$27.1 million in 2019-20.

However, with the recession in Australia expected to deepen, the Chamber of Arts and Culture WA report predicted there would be a reduction in corporate sponsorship over the next two years.

WA Ballet and Co₃ have already flagged a loss of corporate sponsors.

Perth Symphony Orchestra founder and chief executive Bourby Webster said her organisation was well supported now, but was concerned about sponsorship revenue if the orchestra couldn't perform again soon.

"Funders and sponsors are going to go, 'look, if we aren't getting anything in return, we are not just going to keep helping,' or, for obvious reasons, they will be struggling too," Ms Webster said.

Perth Symphony Orchestra has a unique funding model that saw 20 BUSINESS NEWS | August 10, 2020 it impacted by COVID-19 more than most.

The orchestra, ranked as the 16th largest arts organisation on Data & Insights, prides itself on its ability to operate on revenue from ticket sales and minimal government funding.

According to the company's most recent annual report, about 61 per cent of revenue was from ticket sales and 28 per cent from sponsorships and donations.

Ms Webster said the company lost its major income stream when the orchestra couldn't perform.

She said the first shows back, including Stardust: The Music of David Bowie, planned for September, had to sell well.

"As an orchestra that relies on ticket sales, we have to sell out," Ms Webster told *Business News*.

"Our breakeven is insanely high because we don't have that funding to put towards our concert.

"That's a concern for us all to go, 'What is customer sentiment? What are the patrons feeling?'"

Data compiled by seven government arts agencies, along

As an orchestra that relies on ticket sales, we have to sell out

- Bourby Webster

with research organisations Patternmakers and WolfBrown, suggested consumer confidence to attend arts and cultural events in WA was at 37 per cent in July, compared to 24 per cent nationally.

The growing customer sentiment was confirmed by Artrage, which reported its Girls School Cinema venue had posted a 300 per cent increase in year-on-year ticket sales, before opening night.

Changing times

The time away from the stage hadn't been wasted, Ms Webster said, with the company reviewing its strategy.

"While I never want to go through this ever again, there is most definitely the opportunity, and I think most arts companies will have used this time to have taken a really good hard look at what we are doing and how we are doing it and what we can do in the future that might be different," Ms Webster.

The orchestra was using one of its first Lotterywest grants to refresh its IT systems and was undergoing a strategic marketing review.

Black Swan's Mr Heath, who joined the company as executive director in January, said the theatre was undergoing change before the pandemic.

He had plans to refocus the identity around Black Swan as a brand, rather than focusing on its attachment to the 'state theatre company'.

"We need to show people what we stand for, not ride on, the fact that we are the state theatre company, losing that sense of entitlement I think is very much around my future direction," Mr Heath said.

COMMUNITY AND ARTS

The plan revolved around ensuring Black Swan's work reached more members of the community, details of which would be revealed in the company's program for next year.

"It's not, 'We are up here, it's the elite arts, here's the highend work for the people in the western suburbs', it's more about providing that engagement and there are a couple of projects which are really going to feed into that next year," he said.

Local focus

One opportunity arising from the pandemic and WA's hard border, Mr Heath said, was the chance to showcase more local artists.

Perth Festival executive director Nathan Bennett told *Business News* earlier this the year the 2021 festival would commission more local works to support artists.

Although an open access event, Fringe World Festival has also flagged that a majority of its shows will be local and has implemented measures, including removing upfront registration costs, to make the festival more accessible for artists who are doing it tough.

RAC Arena, which usually stages international acts, has organised for local performers, including San Cisco's Scarlett Stevens and Dan Riches from The Struggling Kings, to perform on Friday and Saturday nights.

The Perth Cultural Centre is set to provide more entertainment, too, with the new Western Australian Museum opening on November 21 and the Art Galley of Western Australia's rooftop project, Elevate, which includes a 500-person rooftop venue and an open-air rooftop sculpture park, scheduled for completion early next year.

Mr Heath said more local collaborations were in the works, with Black Swan teaming up with the other theatre companies, Marrugeku, Last Great Hunt, The Blue Room Theatre and Barking Gecko Theatre, to share audiences.

There were also discussions about collaboration options with the other large publicly-funded organisations, West Australian Ballet, WA Opera and West Australian Symphony Orchestra, he said

"I think there is a sense of will at the moment that I am optimistic about."

Data & Insights

WA'S LARGEST ARTS & CULTURAL ORGANISATIONS

Ranked by total revenue



Rank	Change	Name	Senior executive and title	Year est.	Total staff in WA	Total patrons most recent financial year	Balance date	Total revenue (\$,000s) a) most recent financial year b) previous financial year	Operating revenue (\$,000s) a) most recent financial year b) previous financial year	WA State Govern- ment funding (\$,000s)	Federal Govern- ment funding (\$,000s)	Local Govern- ment funding (\$,000s)	Private sector grants, sponsor- ship and donations (\$,000s)	Other revenue (\$,000s)
1	_	State Library of Western Australia	Ms Margaret Allen Chief executive, state librarian	1951	149	1,209,175	30-Jun-19	a) 31,921 b) 35,798	a) 670 b) 766	30,182	217	153	400	299
2	-	WA Museum	Mr Alec Coles Chief executive	1891	226	782,824	30-Jun-19	a) 30,101 b) 32,934	a) 2,943 b) 4,058	24,168	282		1,780	841
3	H	Artrage	Ms Sharon Burgess Chief executive	1983	12	857,747	30-Jun-19	a) 25,037 b) 21,342	a) 19,632 b) 16,998	1,285			4,119	-
4	1	Perth Theatre Trust	Mr Duncan Ord General manager	1979	368	526,262	30-Jun-19	a) 20,707 b) 20,426	a) 7,096 b) 6,371	12,371	<u> </u>	-	896	287
5	1	Screenwest	Mr Willie Rowe Chief executive	1992	20	N/A	30-Jun-19	a) 20,354 b) 15,395	a) 683 b) 631	19,099	34	<u>-</u>	-	522
6	4	WA Symphony Orchestra	Mr Paul Shannon Interim chief executive	1928	115	207,520	31-Dec-19	a) 19,832 b) 21,244	a) 5,689 b) 6,356	2,627	7,382	<u>-</u>	3,982	151
7	Ψ	Perth Festival	Mr Nathan Bennett Executive director	1953	37	413,087	30-Jun- 20	a) 17,800 b) 17,000	a) NFP b) NFP	8,250	<u> </u>	532	2,700	-
8	_	Art Gallery of WA	Dr Colin Walker Interim chief executive	1895	43	375,698	30-Jun-19	a) 14,349 b) 13,869	a) 1,048 b) 1,660	8,056	-	-	1,566	3,683
9	_	West Australian Ballet	Ms Jessica Machin Executive director	1952	90	94,038	31-Dec-19	a) 13,134 b) 11,250	a) 4,092 b) 3,837	3,508	868	70	4,162	434
10	_	FORM building a state of creativity Inc	Ms Lynda Dorrington Executive director	1968	32	244,301	31-Dec- 18	a) 7,169 b) 5,809	a) 2,576 b) 2,438	661	473	-	3,317	72
11	^	West Australian Opera	Ms Carolyn Chard Executive director	1967	15	40,573	31-Dec-19	a) 5,878 b) 5,657	a) 1,080 b) 1,258	2,214	492	<u>-</u>	1,608	485
12	Ψ	Black Swan State Theatre Company of WA	Mr Rick Heath Executive director	1991	150	31,035	31-Dec-19	a) 5,533 b) 6,191	a) 1,452 b) 1,062	1,781	753	-	1,054	492
13	_	Broome Aboriginal Media Association	Mr Stephen Albert Chair	1991	17		30-Jun-19	a) 3,692 b) 3,787	a) 1,532 b) 1,561	307	1,686	-	138	9
14	^	DADAA	Mr David Doyle Executive director	1994	137	40,000	30-Jun-19	a) 3,409 b) 2,837	a) 1,180 b) 776	2,112	<u>-</u>	-	47	71
15	Ψ	Regional Arts WA	Mr Paul MacPhail Executive director	1994	38		31-Dec-19	a) 3,023 b) 3,614	a) 169 b) 166	1,852	928	-	62	12
16	^	Perth Symphony Orchestra	Ms Bourby Webster Founder, executive director	2011	13	126,000	31-Dec-19	a) 2,343* b) 1,478	a) 1,462 b) 1,057	<u>-</u>	<u>-</u>	15	410	3
17	Ψ	Perth Institute of Contemporary Arts	Ms Amy Barrett-Lennard Director, chief executive	1989	45	317,572	31-Dec-19	a) 2,201 b) 2,138	a) 225 b) 247	840	604	80	447	5
18	Ψ	Barking Gecko Theatre	Ms Helen Hristofski Chief executive	1989	70	23,096	31-Dec-19	a) 2,095 b) 1,963	a) 731 b) 406	734	175	<u>-</u>	410	46

GET THE FULL LIST ONLINE Q businessnews.com.au/bniq/arts-cultural-organisations

All information compiled using surveys, publicly available data and contact with industry sources. Other companies may be eligible for inclusion. If you believe your company is eligible, please email: claire.byl@businessnews.com.au WND: Would Not Disclose, NFP: Not For Publication, N/A: Not Applicable or Not Available.

^{*} Perth Symphony Orchestra most recent financial year was an 18 months period

^{**} KALACC did not report the breakdown between state and federal government grants



Photos: Pia Boyer (top), Paul Bell (bottom).

of



MUSIC: Michelle Smith performed at the Denmark Festival of Voice. **Photo: Warren Lilford**

Outback arts show value

Madeleine Stephens

madeleine.stephens@businessnews.com.au

BEYOND His Majesty's Theatre and the Art Gallery of WA, arts organisations in the regions are creating work to engage their communities in challenging conditions.

After four years of planning, Theatre Kimberley organised giant puppet shorebirds to light up Roebuck Bay in Broome, in a celebration of the 120,000 birds which migrate from Siberia to the bay each wet season.

Further north, the Mowanjum Festival draws thousands of tourists from across Australia each year to share the culture of the Ngarinyin, Worrorra and Wunambal peoples.

Down south, thousands of people attend the Denmark Festival of Voice to see local and international artists.

But the Arts and Culture Economic Recovery Plan, written by the Chamber of Arts and Culture WA, said one of the key issues facing the sector in Western Australia was the inequity between organisations in the city and the regions.

The report said regional artists and communities continued to be disadvantaged in their ability to participate – by intrastate travel costs, Perth-centric funding models, digital access and lack of access to cultural infrastructure.

While funding had become a perennial issue for the arts sector, Regional Arts WA chief executive Paul MacPhail said there was something of a bias towards metropolitan organisations over regional organisations in state funding.

"I do see some regional arts organisations who have absolutely fantastic programs of work on an annual basis and then I look at some metropolitan organisations," Mr MacPhail said.

"And I think, 'well perhaps it isn't quite the same program of work happening there for their community as there is being delivered by a small regional organisation' and yet they [small regional organisations] can't seem to compete when it comes to funding."

Regional Arts WA runs its own grant programs, but Mr MacPhail said the maximum it could give to an organisation was \$40,000.

"The amount we can give out is tiny compared to the amount that is given out in the Arts Organisations Investment Program, which has a very heavy weighting towards Perth metropolitan organisations," he said.

The Department of Local Government, Sport and Cultural Industry's Arts Organisations Investment Program allocated \$31 million to 37 arts organisations in WA in 2019, three of which were based in regional WA.

Some organisations in the regions fared well in the latest round of multi-year funding for small-to-medium companies from the Australia Council for the Arts, and accounted for five out of the 11 grants given to WA companies.

We are really blessed in the south coast because we have as good as cultural milieu living in the region as Perth does - Vivienne Robertson

Regional organisations are also supported through the Royalties for Regions program, which in 2019 allocated \$20 million for three streams of funding (capacity building, strengthening Aboriginal arts and youth arts) and \$8 million for the Regional Exhibitions Touring Program over the next four years.

According to the Chamber of Arts and Culture WA report, the lack of coordinated planning and delivery between the separate streams of Royalties for Regions funding is a missed opportunity for recovery and growth.

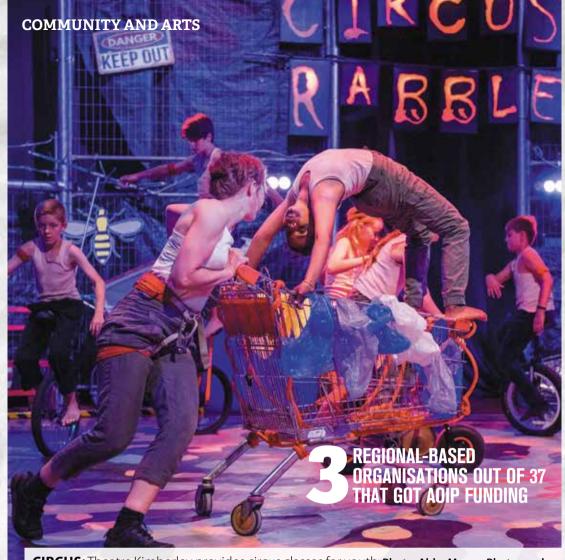
It said regional artists needed increased investment and capacity to develop and engage,

especially to operate after the COVID-19 shutdown.

"Current programs, however, favour an approach of delivering art to the regions, rather than investing in regional arts themselves and, from a regional perspective, appear fragmented and lacking a cohesive vision," the report said.

Denmark Arts artistic director Vivienne Robertson told *Business News* while she thought Royalties for Regions was a great initiative, a significant amount of money was allocated to metropolitan companies to tour regional areas.

"In some regional areas, that's probably a really wonderful thing that they might have someone



CIRCUS: Theatre Kimberley provides circus classes for youth. Photo: Abby Murray Photography



DANCE TIME: Mowanjum Festival draws thousands of tourists each year. **Photo: Rebecca Mansell**



GLOBAL: The Denmark Festival of Voice attracts international acts like the Aznash Laaman Chechen Ensemble.

Photo: Hazel Blake

Regional arts organisations are able to produce work that brings their communities together, without the budgets and resources of companies in the city.

touring their region," Ms Robertson said.

"We are really blessed in the south coast because we have as good a cultural milieu living in the region as Perth does.

"The thing is, regional funds need to be given to those people who are already on the ground doing the work, they don't need to be given to Perth people to come and help the poor country cousins."

She said the organisation had focused on increasing its earned income, because corporate sponsorship was hard to come by in Denmark and relying on grant funding was precarious.

According to Ms Robertson, about 30 per cent of income was from sales in 2019.

Most of the organisation's earned income was from big events, including the Denmark Festival of Voice, which had to be cancelled because of COVID-19 restrictions.

Ms Robertson said this left the organisation in an insecure

financial position, and its team of four was volunteering extra hours to ensure the organisation could apply for small relief grants to stay afloat.

"It's a crazily administrative-heavy system that has been developed for quite small grants," she said

Mowanjum Aboriginal Art & Cultural Centre, situated on the Gibb River Road, was disproportionately affected by COVID-19 because it is situated in the Mowanjum Aboriginal community, which is closed to visitors until the state government introduces phase five restrictions.

Manager Barry Hayes said the government had approved an exemption for the centre to allow guests to start visiting from the end of July.

"We missed out on the school holiday crowd but we are hoping to salvage a bit of the dry season tourist numbers and try and get some sales in," Mr Hayes said.

He said JobKeeper had been supporting artists who had been

working in the studios for the past two months.

Because the dry season was nearly over, Mr Hayes said the centre was not expecting any major income until March or April next year.

Theatre Kimberley artistic director Meredith Bell also said remoteness could make work more costly.

Projects could be more expensive to plan, she said, which was sometimes not understood by people administering the funding.

"We sometimes put in to try and fund projects and people don't have the understanding of what the conditions are like here," Ms Bell told Business News

She said isolation also made it harder to learn and cooperate with other arts organisations.

"There is a difficulty in staying connected to peers and other parts of your network to maintain a strong professional practice," she said.

To encourage connectivity between arts professionals in

We sometimes put in to try and fund projects and people don't have the understanding of what the conditions are like here - Meredith Bell

the regions, Regional Arts WA is in the process of establishing arts hubs around the state, in partnership with the Ian Potter Foundation and the Minderoo Foundation.

Regional Art WA's Mr MacPhail said the hubs were charged with looking after artists and working with other hubs to share knowledge and insights with arts workers in the regions.

"It's at a very small scale at the moment, but we are hoping to build that over the next four years so hopefully, by 2023, there is 17 arts hubs right across the state that will start to help combat that sense of isolation," Mr MacPhail said. Art Gold, Ravensthorpe Regional Arts, The Junction Co, Creative Corner and North Midlands Project have been recruited as hubs.

Port Hedland-based The Junction Co, which was established in 2018, has a gallery and studio and offers a number of arts and community classes.

Executive officer Katie Evans said the hubs were going to be important in building capacity in the regions.

"We are a relatively new arts organisation and it's great to be able to leverage off this network and because we are new, we have got a bit to contribute to that network as well," Ms Evans said.

