

## SUBMISSION ON PUBLIC ART FUTURE DIRECTION DISCUSSION PAPER

Artsource is pleased to respond to the invitation to comment on the above Discussion Paper.

### About ArtSource

Artsource is the peak membership body for visual artists in Western Australia with over 900 members. Our vision is of a world in which culture and the arts are valued as vital and where visual artists flourish. These artists represent many different perspectives, but we all share a deep commitment to art and a strong belief in the contribution artists make to the world.

Artsource has been operating for thirty years with a diverse stream of income, including funding from government, private sector, individuals and fee for service income. Our headquarters are still at the original offices at Old Customs House, Fremantle, where an initial eight artist studios on offer has now grown to 89 in a range of locations across Perth. The variety of services we provide for studios and residencies, consulting, membership, professional development and patronage, are overseen by our 12 staff. We are a not-for-profit organisation, a company limited by guarantee and some operational funding is provided by the State Government through the DCA's Organisations Investment Programme. Note that none of this funding is applied to Artsource Consulting (includes our work in Public Art) which is self-supporting and returns a surplus to support other membership services.

### Introduction

Artsource has, for many years, effectively advocated for a universal percent for art policy across all levels of Government and have been pleased to see this has been adopted by a large number of local government authorities both metropolitan and regional in recent years.

Through Artsource Consulting we have been actively involved in all aspects of the delivery of public art in Western Australia including:

- The management of Public art projects with budgets over \$50,000 for both local government and private developers;
- Development of Public Art Policies, Strategies and Masterplans for both local government and developers;

- Designing and delivering Public Place-Making initiatives

A vital part of our work is to promote and be an advocate for practices that are fair to artists and deliver quality outcomes for all concerned. Whilst Artsource does not currently undertake State Government Percent for Art Projects as Consultants, we often assist our members involved in these projects.

In 2014 we undertook a full independent review of our Public Art Consultancy Services. Some of the key recommendations, which we have since implemented, include:

- Improved dispute resolution processes;
- Regular professional development for artists;
- Regular benchmarking of completed projects;
- Improved information provided in briefs;
- Introduced confidentiality agreements at concept development stage to protect artists' intellectual property;

We comment below on the specific issues raised in your Discussion Paper.

## Submission

### DATA COLLECTION

Artsource believes that accurate and comprehensive data on all Public Art commissioned by the State Government is important:

- To better document the annual investment in Art by the State Government;
- To be able to measure the economic impact of this important investment;
- To provide a sound evidence base for future investments;
- To develop a body of knowledge and expertise in Public Art within State Government.

Our 2014 Review identified the need to regularly benchmark public art projects budgets and outcomes:

Recommendation 7: Artsource Consulting regularly benchmarks sample public art projects' budgets and outcomes, including key aspects: artwork outcome, artist fees, material costs, process, installation and maintenance costs. Comparative data should capture estimated and actuals budgetary information from artists at the completion of each project. This will form a useful consultation and scoping tool.

Artsource supports the Discussion paper' s recommendations in this area. In addition, Artsource would like to see a public register of State Owned Public Art available on-line which would also

include important information about the artworks and the artists. These assets form part of the State's valuable Cultural Collections. Promotion and publicising of these projects shines a light on our substantial local talent pool of artists, as well as adding another layer of transparency to the process.

## **CONSISTENCY IN PUBLIC ART PROCEDURES**

Artsource supports the recommendations to develop a consistent set of guidelines.

Recently we have noticed a significant rise in queries from artists with concerns about State Government Percent for Art Projects. Some recent examples include:

- Commissioning Agencies using contracts which are designed for general building contractors and do not include specific requirements relating to commissioned art works, particularly issues of copyright and moral rights.
- EOI's not including a provision for concept development fees;
- A recent example where an agency's tender document required the public art component to be fully designed and documented, in contradiction of its own percent for art policy published on the agency's website.

These examples indicate a lack of knowledge within some Agencies of Public Art and the commissioning process, including the role of the Art Consultant.

The current trend in State Government commissioning capital works by Public Private Partnerships to design, build, lease and maintain infrastructure, has important implications for the method in which future Public Art on these projects is commissioned. From our observation, sadly, there is no consistent application of existing policies and procedures established by the State Government.

Our 2014 Review of Artsource Consulting identified the importance of the scoping stage of the project including preparation of the Brief, noting that overwhelmingly the success of the project relies on this stage being done comprehensively. In particular, early identification of site preparation, installation, transport, engineering, lighting and local authority approval costs help ensure there are no disputes later in the project.

Our independent review also confirmed that our selection process was highly valued by artists. Our selection process is either by Expression of Interest, in the majority of cases, or by a curated invited list. Our database of professional artists is a valuable resource for us to use in compiling shortlists for invitations.

We are constantly reviewing and seeking to improve this process and recently have introduced the signing of Confidentiality Agreements by all selection panel members. Our selection panels are usually made up of the commissioner, architect and a local government representative who are the main decision makers. Additionally, we always ensure a curator, or experienced artist, is present. Their role is to advise on the artistic merit of the proposals and concepts.

We also note that, as Percent for Art becomes more embedded into Local Government, there is a wide range of processes and policies applicable. Notwithstanding that each Local Government has its own Public Art strategy and unique needs and requirements, we see a benefit in the State Government also working with WALGA to agree common guidelines and approval processes that then flow on to private developers.

### **BUDGET THRESHOLDS**

Artsource supports the recommendation that there is standardisation and consistent / mandatory application of the percentage for art applied to State Government projects.

In working with Local Government, particularly in developing Masterplans and Strategies for Public Art, we recommend eligible projects include all development proposals for multiple dwellings, mixed use, commercial, civic, institutional, educational projects or public works of value greater than \$1M.

In relation to peer membership on selection panels, Artsource promotes the inclusion of an independent art specialist on ALL selection panels. The specialist, who may or may not be a public art practitioner, will have a sound knowledge of contemporary arts practice, and their role is to ensure the artistic quality and rigour of concepts presented.

We also note that a review of appropriate Concept or Presentation fees for short-listed artists is overdue. A scale of fees that better recognises the effort and expenses, particularly where a team approach is required. For example, it would not be unrealistic for an artist to dedicate two to three weeks work for a substantial commission, plus engagement of a model maker and draftsperson/graphics person.

## **Diversity**

### **TYPES OF PUBLIC ART**

Public art is broadly defined as work or activity designed and/or fabricated by an artist, installed in the public space and accessible to the general public. The work may be temporary or permanent,

located in a public space or facility provided by both the public and private sector (this includes areas within private buildings that are easily accessible by the public).

In our work with Local Government we outline the broad range of public arts types and encourage variety and diversity in application. These types include: applied, community art, discovery, family-friendly, functional, ground plane, heritage, memorial, indigenous, integrated, interactive, land(scape), multi-media, landmark, nodal, urban or street art and temporary and ephemeral works. We also encourage, where appropriate, the acquisition of two and three dimensional works, for example, in public reception or foyer areas. To support Local Government, Artsource runs information sessions and briefings for staff involved in Public Art. This promotes understanding the broad range of public art that can be commissioned and the principles of best practice.

The use of temporary and ephemeral works has become popular as a response to place-making and place-activation. With large budgets, there may be room to consider reserving some budget for temporary works following the commissioning of the building. We recently undertook a large commission for the MRA, King' s Square, which involved several individual commissions, plus a temporary and ephemeral program that has been delivered over a six-month period, following the building opening.

We note there has been a shift (particularly in the last five years) towards clients, developers and invested parties absorbing the artwork budget into the utilitarian aspects of the building (for example, shading structures, or screens). The resulting works are sometimes merely decorative, as opposed to truly artistic interventions. Similarly, where the works are stand-alone, they are heavily engineered and much of the budgets are swallowed up with site-works, footings, landscaping, engineering, etc. As there is less money available, the options for bold, creative and intuitive works are becoming limited, and the works of public artists may be further compromised.

Above all else, this review should place the artistic and creative aspect of the scheme at the centre, and avoid material and genre fads.

## **RANGE OF ARTISTS**

A narrow interpretation of types of public art means that a relatively narrow group of artists is engaged and there is limited opportunity for the involvement of less experienced emerging artists, or those working in different genres and media.

Artsource has successfully trialled a model to provide opportunities for an emerging artists. We are currently undertaking a large project which has a team of three artists, each working on separate pieces. We have included an emerging public artist who is supported and mentored by the more experienced artist. Artsource has also introduced a Masterclass series, delivered over three full day workshops, to support artists wishing to develop their work in the public art space.

We would encourage the review to include a mechanism or avenue for confidential advice for artists if they do not understand their contracts or they have questions regarding expectations and payments.

We endorse the view of the discussion paper that a wider variety and diversity of artists involved in the scheme strengthens local art practice and contributes to public value.

#### **ART COORDINATOR/CONSULTANT PANELS**

Artsource, whilst conducting an Arts Consultancy arm, is not on the Dept. of Finance, Building Management and Works, Art Coordination Services Panel for projects with budgets less than \$5M panel, although we are on the separate Metropolitan Redevelopment Authority' s panel.

The Artsource Consulting team and collegiate approach brings together a rich history, diversity and range of experiences of our team members. This team-based approach to coordinating Public Art projects helps minimise project delays and interruptions. It also allows us to provide internships, and to provide development opportunities for our consultants. We note that all current members of the BMW panel are individual consultants/sole traders, rather than teams or organisations, and with this composition there is reduced opportunity to provide internships or training opportunities for emerging coordinators.

We note the current contract for Art Coordination Panel concludes in January 2017. We would encourage the review of schedule of fees and rates before the next tender issues, as the hourly rates percentages are well below current market rates.

#### **LOCAL, NATIONAL, INTERNATIONAL**

Artsource represents WA visual artists and strongly encourages local content in art projects. However, to exclude national and international artists entirely is neither realistic nor desirable. Indeed, it's a two-way street and WA artists should be given every support to operate nationally and internationally if they chose to do so. As for WA, there is something to be said about the benefits of including International artists from time to time.

Two recent examples are a case in point:

- Kings Square development (MRA) managed by Artsource, involved several International and Interstate artists, as well as local artists. This provided an opportunity for the visiting artists to deliver public artists talks during the community open day when the precinct was officially opened. Artsource also held artists' talks during one of the early site visits. These provided excellent professional development opportunities for local artists, although, their involvement also raised other unforeseen logistical issues with the artist/s not being close at hand.
- New Stadium Project, managed by FORM, included a Land Art Project by Internationally renowned Artist Chris Drury. FORM hosted an artist talk which was attended by over 100 people, mostly local artists.

Artsource is supportive of the proposal that some major projects over \$500K are open interstate and internationally, where appropriate, with the proviso that opportunities for exchange of ideas with local artists is included. We would also like to see WA artists supported to apply for national and international projects.

## Closing Remarks

Perth is becoming well-known for its exciting public art. Iconic landmark works such as James Angus' "Grow Your Own" and Christian Di Vietri's "Spanda" have contributed to this recognition, as have our efforts in advocating for a Universal Percent for Art program, as well as the "Public" initiative delivered by our colleagues at FORM.

It is important that the State Government's lead role continues to raise the bar in the commissioning and delivery of high quality public art works and, to this end, Artsource supports the efforts of Department of Culture and the Arts, and the suggestions raised in this Discussion Paper.