

**Ricky Arnold and Associates**

**Review of Artsource Consulting  
Final Report**

**Ricky Arnold**

## Executive summary

During April – July 2014, I consulted artists, clients and Artsource Consultants to discuss experiences around the implementation of a sample of six public art projects of various scales. I have also held two focus groups consisting of a range of emerging and established artists working in the public art realm, alongside interviews with key current and past artist reps from Artsource Board.

Firstly, it was strongly noted by all participants that no project, regardless of who is managing it, ever goes without issues and problems that need to be solved. The individual nature of every project means there are always new issues arising. The nature of artists “pushing boundaries” with the quest for innovation in design in the public space inherently raises new issues and problems that will need the artist/consultant/client team to collaborate on solution development.

Secondly, it is important to note that when discussing experiences many artists and stakeholders to whom I spoke did not differentiate between the origins of a project. In focus group discussions on difficulties experienced in public art projects, and with public art consultant processes, it was invariably the State Government Percent for Arts Scheme or local government projects that were raised by the participants, rather than Artsource managed projects. This contributes to confusion and possible damage to Artsource’ reputation in public art project management. Nonetheless, I did identify a number of areas where Artsource should improve its processes and these form the basis of my recommendations.

Thirdly, I found artists and clients valued the role of Artsource consulting. Clients appreciated the fact they could hand over the project management to a team who understand the arts, and artists really appreciated the mediation/communication role consultants play between artist and client. However the expectations of consultants are enormous. They are expected to be architect trained, experienced builders, “legal eagles”, hard-nosed business negotiators, have artistic sensibilities AND be entrepreneurs. All artists agreed the role of the consultant is a difficult one.

There was much positive commentary, and much for Artsource and its Consultancy area to be proud of:

- Membership benefits decreasing the costs of public liability and professional indemnity insurance costs for artists;
- Excellent targeted professional development sessions assisting artists improve on design documentation, pitching practices, risk management, engaging clients in ensuring artists understand their needs, and also engaging members to talk with each other on innovative projects in development;
- Engaging in relevant responsive two stage selection processes, where early expressions of interest do not require large investment for artists until shortlisted for a project;
- Assigning design fees payable for shortlisted artists to work up design concepts;
- Providing opportunities for emerging artists, specialised practices such as aboriginal art or new technologies;
- Open ended briefs leaving scope for full artistic innovative responses;
- Implementing Aboriginal protocols for appropriate local reference group input to commissioning processes;
- Having artists on selection panels;
- Recommending professional services appropriate to the arts such as structural engineers, fabricators etc;
- Managing the Local Government approval processes;
- Client satisfaction with the end arts product commissioned.

Interestingly, there is of course a broad church to Artsource' membership, and there arose a number of contradictions in opinions and expectations. Where some artists wanted open ended briefs to allow for full artistic innovation, others wanted more information and clear direction to prevent wasting time on designing something that is not wanted. Where some artists appreciated the consultant playing a role of mediator between artist and client, others wanted more direct access to the clients. The strongest tension concerned expectations of who the consultant is working for. Clients expect the fee they pay to deliver a solid service they need. Artists expect the consultant to represent their needs in the relationship, and worry that the consultant is conflicted by the need to keep client income coming into Artsource. All agree it's a difficult road to travel.

It is timely for Artsource to reiterate to its membership that the Consulting team take on projects to benefit its membership base, not to purely raise capital for the organisation. I believe the new Artsource Vision, Purpose and Values helps address this. Having visual artists at the core of Artsource' reason for being is an important message for the membership:

## **Our vision is a world in which culture and the arts are valued as vital and where visual artists flourish.**

Our Purpose is to engage with and support Western Australian visual artists with practical, affordable and relevant services. We also work with partners delivering and supporting initiatives that lead the way in creating the environment where art is valued and artists can flourish.

Key Value statements:

1. Artists are at the heart of everything we do; and
2. Our belief in artists and the contribution they make to the world is absolute.

Key Strategy:

1. We will support artists directly by providing relevant, practical and affordable services: membership, studios, residencies, finding work opportunities, providing insurance, workshops, advice, news, online artist profile, etc.

My recommendations for process improvements really follow three main categories:

- A "whole of organisation" approach needs to be adopted to support the Consulting team successfully operate in this difficult complex area. This must look at the development of a pool of legal representatives and other expertise to support and advise, particularly around contractual enforcement. Independent advisory groups around ethical and standards issues can support the Board in their governance processes, and a formalised dispute resolution and complaints process will assist the Executive Team. Collaborative support of all Artsource program teams, assisting with studio visits, professional development session planning and Aboriginal protocol advice will continue to strengthen the organisation's success. This even flows to the membership where there are highly experienced and skilled artists and consultants who can support and mentor where needed.
- A continuous learning approach makes time for evaluation, collating information on costs, outcomes, risks and controls, best practice processes which can be shared across the teams and prevent inexperience resulting in mistakes.

- Clear expectations and responsibilities more formalised in briefs and contracts, at the early stages of a project. Management of the client and artist expectations about the work involved at concept and the design documentation stages. The consultation clearly raised concerns around growth in expectation of final design being available at concept presentation stages, leaving little room for change at design documentation stages. Formal variations and documentation of decisions and issues must become core practice. This is particularly true of projects where artworks integrate with buildings, the cost shifting and responsibility for costs associated with installation, engineering sign offs etc very quickly decrease an artist's fee if not adequately budgeted for, or assigned to other costs in the building budget. One of the most poignant quotes encapsulates this: “ “Expectations and responsibilities should be determined while everyone is friendly and speaking to each other!”

Finally, I encourage the Board and Artsource to take up the ambitious challenge this consultation raised: Finding a developer/builder who is willing to employ an artist at the outset of a new project; where conceptual approach is the starting point to a creative outcome, not the add on at the end.

Ricky Arnold  
Ricky Arnold and Associates  
August 2014

## Review of Artsource Consulting Consultant Ricky Arnold

### Final recommendations and actions accepted by the Board

REC 1: Articulate the aims of Artsource Consulting as they are embedded in Artsource' Vision, Purpose, Values and Strategies, and manage the team approach in line with this. Emphasising the focus on artist benefit as opposed to client focus will assist in artist relationship management.

Action: Implementation commenced. Completion by end 2015.

REC 2: Development of Artsource Consulting is planned considering a whole of organisation approach. All levels of the organisation to contribute to the governance, management and implementation of the Consulting Services:

- Artsource to develop a pool of legal representatives and other expertise to support and advise Consulting Services, particularly around contractual enforcement.
- A dispute resolution or complaints process to be formulated and made publically available. This needs to start as an internal process that is escalated from the Consulting Manager to the CEO to the Board.
- An ethics and standards board should be established to provide independent advice relating to the integrity and ethics of Artsource actions and policies. The ethics and standards board to be an advisory group to the Artsource Board.

Action: To be implemented by end 2015.

REC 3: Professional Development sessions to be programmed regularly for members on public art requirements including tender submissions, presenting projects, design development requirements, project management and risk planning.

Action: To be implemented in the 2015 Professional Development program.

REC 4: Consultants liaise across membership closely, assist in keeping database up to date, and regularly visit members studios to stay across the artists' practice and development.

Action: Implementation completed.

REC 5: Successful senior artists are identified to become a mentor pool for emerging artists. Remuneration is considered when playing this role.

Action: Agreed that remuneration is **essential** for mentors. Implementation commenced.

REC 6: Artsource Board and Executive to challenge a client/developer to include an artist in the project team from early project inception and planning. Artist to be selected based on experience, maturity and matched conceptual approach.

Action: To be implemented at opportunity.

REC 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.

Action: Implementation will be progressive; sample projects available by end 2015.

REC 8: Briefs to include additional information, where possible:

- Naming the builder appointed for the project
- Outlining the Council approval processes which will be sought;
- Interview dates up front;
- Who is responsible for building license fees
- Likely collaborators

Action:

- Implementation completed. Information all included in initial briefs.
- Further potential for projects to include two briefs; one a concept stage and a second at design stage. If adopted, the whole process to be outlined from the beginning.

REC 9: Artsource to ensure the requirements expected at the concept stage and the design stage of projects are clear and that the expectations of both the clients and artists are realistic. Need to scale the fees and increase for more complex projects. Benchmark costs spent on CAD drawing, 3D modelling, graphic design costs, structural engineering approvals etc.

Action: Implementation completed. Procedures have been updated to ensure that design fees can be negotiated to reflect with the work demanded in the brief for each project.

REC 10: Artsource ensures artists are aware if multiple approval levels are required in any selection process. Artsource to encourage "decision makers" in the approval process to participate in scoping, brief development, selection panels and commissioning processes.

Action: Implemented completed. Information all included in initial briefs

REC 11: Intellectual property protection is a key issue at these early stages of a commissioning process, and agreements with clients and members of a selection panel (including artist representatives) should include a formal affirmation of confidentiality and declaration of any conflict of interest.

Action: To be implemented by end 2015.

REC 12: Selection Criteria be adaptable to each project briefs needs. Artsource will strengthen the arts responses, innovation and contemporary relevance alongside the need for solid project management and experience. Consultants to encourage decision making against relevant criteria.

Action: Implementation completed.

REC 13: Artsource to obtain more formal approvals and agreements between artists and clients on financial responsibilities around costs such as preparation of site, installation, transport, engineering and local authority approval costs, and lighting in commissioning contract, or through formal variation of contract at design documentation sign-off stage.

Action: Implementation completed. Formal addendums to contracts now being signed off for all variations.

REC 14: Ability for artists to negotiate payment structure and milestones is crucial. Artsource consultants to ensure artists have considered the impact of the milestone payments and a project by project approach is implemented.

Action: Implementation completed. Procedures have been updated to ensure that Consultants work through payment structures and options with artists to ensure they reflect the requirements of each project.

REC 15: Artsource to clarify and strengthen its project management role for artists and clients. By articulating the role and duties the management fee includes, additional assistance that may be required by artists and clients can be identified and possibly costed as part of the budgeting of each project.

Action: Implementation completed. Scope of works now being discussed and included in the artists contracts.

REC 16: It may be useful to advocate for a best practice study to be conducted across local governments to align artwork approval processes.

Action: Artsource to approach WALGA with proposal to work on development and promotion of a best practice guide for public art projects. To be instigated in 2015.

REC 17: Artsource to work with professional artists and builders to put together a risk register which would assist consultants supporting the installation stages of projects. This register would be useful in professional development sessions for artist training.

Action: To be implemented by end 2015.