

Industry Forum: Young People and the Arts
Wed 30 May @ ATYP

Transcript of sector update by Elizabeth Hill, Create NSW

- My name is Liz Hill, I work as senior policy lead at Create NSW. I'd like to acknowledge the Gadigal people of the Eora nation, the first people to create art and play and dance on this land. Thanks to Theatre Network for the invitation to come today and congratulations to Sue Giles on the second launch of the *Young People and the Arts paper, An agenda for change*.
- I'm a product of the 1970s movement for theatre for young people, having been a founding member of Shopfront Theatre for young people in 1976. Hands up who is also a product of the youth arts world? We are all evidence of futureproofing the arts by investing in practical skills development at an early age- a point made eloquently by Sue in her paper.
- I stood on a chair to spruik the Declaration of the Rights of the Child in 1979, in a play inspired by the International Year of the Child. I went on to work in children's rights policy roles in organisations like the Commission for Children and Young People and the Royal Commission into Child Sexual Abuse within Institutions. From my experience in all these roles I can see the rights of children and young people are often overlooked by adults in every area of society. So as adults who can be advocates for children, I commend Sue's paper and her recommendations in Chapter 6 to listen to children and young people, to share knowledge, to connect with others, and to find the champions who can collaborate with us to grow the sector.
- Young People are a priority population in the Create in NSW policy. Over the last year, Create NSW has been consulting with young people aged 12-25 via a series of consultation meetings and Youth Arts Roundtables in Metropolitan, Western Sydney and one regional location in Deniliquin (thanks Sarah). We have surveyed around 300 young people and engaged more deeply with over 100 young people. We have partnered with the NSW Advocate for Children and Young People and the peak organisation, Youth Action. Young people have told us that they value their opportunities to engage in the arts as artists and as audience members. They have told us about barriers to their access: barriers like

transport and space and cost and gender and discrimination and cultural difference. They have told us about their aspirations to have careers in the arts and the people around them dissuading them from such a course of action. Young people told us that they value encouragement and mentoring by established artists and community workers because they may not get that at home or at school. They value opportunities to connect and network. Young regional artists complained of the isolation and lack of opportunities in the bush but they also recognised that the best thing about making art in regional NSW is developing their sense of community and country and culture and heritage and identity. In Western Sydney young people explained their difficulties in knowing what is on and in getting around but they also told us that 'Art is a form of escapism' 'Art gives you something to do that isn't school' and 'No one can tell you that your art is wrong!'

- In February, we met with youth arts practitioners and education programmers of cultural institutions and learnt first-hand of your resilience and creativity in a context of rapidly changing funding sources and digital disruption and a constantly changing demographic. Many of you came along to Arts 2025, Minister Harwin's forum held in March to gather the arts, screen and cultural community in NSW. You may have noticed the strong theme of arts education and developing the sector. We are still in the process of sifting the information we have gathered and we hope you will stay in touch with us and be patient as we aim to tell the stories and make the connections and advocate for children and young people and their cultural rights wherever we can. We are looking at including a Youth Arts Strategy in the Arts 2025 Strategic Framework – but what is contained in this strategy is yet to be finalised.
- We value your role in developing the voices of young people in NSW and for providing positive role models and opportunities. Your survival in the sector is a testament to your commitment and creativity and I hope you are proud of what you have achieved. I will leave you with the final word from a young woman who came along to our metropolitan roundtable: 'Youth Arts creates communities. It helps people to communicate and share- and that's what's important for us'. I think she speaks for us all. Thank you...