

2011 NATIONAL INDIGENOUS THEATRE FORUM SUMMARY

CENTRE OF CONTEMPORARY ARTS, CAIRNS

BACKGROUND

This report summarises the key outcomes of the 2011 National Indigenous Theatre Forum (NITF 2011) that took place on August 20 & 21 as part of the Cairns Indigenous Art Fair (CIAF).

The inaugural NITF, held in 2010 saw participants unanimously support a statement entitled *The Cairns Consensus* outlining five prioritised actions for ensuring the development of Indigenous theatre practice in Australia in the short, medium and long term.

NITF 2011 set out to map the achievements over the last year and to further identify issues and actions required for supporting and developing Indigenous theatre over the coming years.

NITF 2011 brought together emerging and established Indigenous theatre practitioners from around Australia in dialogue with peer theatre workers and policy makers from state and federal agencies for two days of discussions, provocations and celebrations.

THE PEOPLE

Forum Facilitators: Lee-Ann Buckskin & Wesley Enoch

Welcome to Country: Uncle Ken Reyes of the Yidinji people

Participants and Contributors

	Name	Position	Organisation	
1	Diat Alferink	Arts Development Officer	Gab Titui	TSI/QLD
2	Libby Anstis	General Manager	QLD Theatre Company	QLD
3	Ricky Arnold	Director, Arts Funding	DCA	WA
4	Sally Basser	First Assistant Secretary	Office for the Arts, DPC	NSW
5	Josh Bond	Emerging Indigenous Producer Mentee	QLD Performing Arts Centre	QLD
6	Collette Brennan	Director, Market Development	Australia Council	NSW
7	Lee-Ann Buckskin	2 nd NITF co-facilitator, Indigenous Program Officer	Carclew	SA
8	Loretta Busby	Producer	Sydney Festival	NSW
9	Gayle Cargill	Executive Officer	Arts Nexus	QLD
10	Phillip Collins	Indigenous Artist		?
11	Sam Cook	Director	The Dreaming Festival	QLD
12	Frederick Copperwaite	Chair	Mooghalin Theatre	NSW

13	Lara Croydon	Emerging Indigenous Producer Mentee	QLD Theatre Company	QLD
14	Cameron Costello	Program Manager - BIA	Arts Queensland	QLD
15	Sonny Dallas Law	Cultural Development Officer	Redfern Community Centre	NSW
16	Bec Dean	Associate Director	Performance Space	NSW
17	Vera Ding	Director - Theatre, Writing & New Media	Arts Queensland	QLD
18	Merindah Donnelly	Indigenous Program Officer	Australia Council	NSW
19	Libby Ellis	Research & Marketing Manager	arTour	QLD
20	Wesley Enoch	2 nd NITF co-facilitator, Artistic Director	QLD Theatre Company	QLD
21	Sarah Fenley	Freelance Event Manager/ Theatre Practitioner	Cairns COCA	QLD
22	Lisa Ffrench	Development Manager	Carriageworks	NSW
23	Sandra Fields	Consultant	Fieldworx	QLD
24	Irene Fuez	Musical Producer		NSW
25	Fenn Gordon	CEO	Performing Lines	NSW
26	Simon Hapea	Freelance theatre practitioner		QLD
27	John Harvey	Producer/Theatre-maker	Brown Cabs Productions	VIC
28	Deon Hastie	Artistic Director	Kurruru Youth Performing Arts	SA
29	Brenna Hobson	General Manager	Belvoir St Theatre	NSW
30	Marcus Hughes	Associate Artistic Director	Aboriginal Centre for the Performing Arts	QLD
31	Andrea James	Aboriginal Arts Development Officer	Blacktown City Council	NSW
32	Kathy Keele	CEO	Australia Council	National
33	Annette Kerwitz	Operations Manager	ArTour	QLD
34	Sei Kosugi	Researcher	Osaka University, Japan	
35	Kerry Klimm	Media Liaison	Kinnect Marketing	QLD
36	Michelle Kotevski	Executive Producer	Urban Theatre Projects	NSW

37	Linda Lucas	Senior Program Manager	Arts Victoria	VIC
38	Todd Macdonald	Artistic Associate	QLD Theatre Company	QLD
39	Rachael Maza-Long	Artistic Director	Illbijerri Theatre Company	VIC
40	Suellen Maunder	Artistic Director/CEO	Jute Theatre Company	QLD
41	Linda McBride-Yuke		State Library of QLD	QLD
42	Erica McCalman	Producer	Sydney Festival	NSW
43	Nadine McDonald-Dowd	Kuril Dhagun Creative Director	State Library of QLD	QLD
44	Lydia Miller	Director, Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander Arts Board	Australia Council	National
45	David Milroy	Theatre Practitioner		WA
46	Kyle Morison	Artistic Director	Yirra Yaakin	WA
47	Deb Murphy	Executive Producer, Presenter Services	QLD Performing Arts Centre	QLD
48	Alison Murphy - Oates	Emerging Indigenous Producer Mentee	Performance Space	NSW
49	Rosalie Pearson	Emerging Indigenous Producer Mentee	UTP & Belvoir St Theatre	NSW
50	Jude Pippen	Director	Creative Regions	QLD
51	Rhoda Roberts	Artistic Director	Saltwater, Freshwater & Boomerang Festival	NSW
52	Amy Rodgers-Clarke	Arts Development Officer	Arts Queensland	QLD
53	Shay Rodrigues		Arts NT	NT
54	Zane Saunders	Theatre/Visual Arts Practitioner		QLD
55	Lily Shearer	General Manager	Gadigal Information Service	NSW
56	Mark Sheppard	Theatre Practitioner		QLD
57	Brad Spolding	General Manager	Illbijeri Theatre Company	VIC
58	Mark Stapleton	Manager, Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander Arts Board	Australia Council	National
59	Bain Stewart	Independent Arts Producer	Bungabura Productions	QLD
60	Liza Mare Syron	Aboriginal Cultural Development Officer	Arts NSW	NSW

61	Frank Trotman-Golden		Australia Council	National
62	Brian Tucker	CPA, Indigenous Arts	Brian Tucker Accounting	QLD
63	Lynn Wallis	Director, Theatre Board	Australia Council	National
64	Peter White	Wesfarmers Arts Indigenous Programs	National Gallery of Australia	National
65	Charles Wiles	Venue Manager, Cairns COCA	Arts QLD	QLD
66	Fiona Winning	2 nd NITF scribe, independent consultant		NSW
67	Irma Woods	Project officer	Yirra Yaakin	WA
68	Tina	Black Dance Australia		?

Of the total 68 participants, 35 identified as Indigenous

State breakdown:

National: 6, QLD: 28, NSW: 20, VIC: 4, WA: 4, SA: 2, NT: 1, ACT: 0, TAS: 0

Forum Participants: Libby Antsis, Josh Bond, Sam Cook, Fred Copperwaite, Lara Croyden, Sonny Dallas Law, Bec Dean, Vera Ding, Merindah Donnelly, Nadine Dowd, Lisa Ffrench, Fenn Gordon, Andrea James, John Harvey, Deon Hastie, Brenna Hobson, Marcus Hughes, Michelle Kotevski, Erica McCalman, Suellen Maunder, Rachael Maza-Long, David Milroy, Deb Murphy, Alison Murphy-Oates, Rosealee Pearson, Rhoda Roberts, Zane Saunders, Lily Shearer, Brad Spolding, Bain Stewart, Liza-Mare Syron, Irma Woods

Forum Guests participating in some sessions: Sally Basser (Office for the Arts), Collette Brennan (Market Development Australia Council), Jane Hayley (ABAF), Kathy Keele (Australia Council), Lydia Miller (ATSIAB Australia Council), Judy Pippen, Mark Stapleton (ATSIAB Australia Council), Lyn Wallis (Theatre Board Australia Council), Peter White (National Gallery of Australia)

Forum documentation & support: Amy Rodgers-Clarke & Fiona Winning

INTRODUCTION

Lee-Ann Buckskin (Manager of Indigenous Arts and Culture Program at Carclew Youth Arts) and Wesley Enoch (Artistic Director of Queensland Theatre Company) facilitated the discussion.

They began with the invitation to all delegates to introduce themselves and outline something in their work/realm of practice that has changed in the last twelve months. There was an overwhelming sense from the participants that since the inaugural NITF, positive change and productive collaborations were not only in process but that 'we are leading that change', 'we said things and people listened'.

Lee-Ann and Wesley welcomed the younger participants, several of whom are in the newly established positions of Indigenous Producer Mentorships created since the last NITF. They talked about the importance of both maintenance and innovation and identified that young people are central to the vision of the theatre of the future.

UPDATES ON PROGRESS FROM 2010 NITF

Wesley and Lee-Ann reminded participants of the Cairns Consensus and revisited the priorities emerging from the 2010 NITF inviting reports from the sector about relevant actions undertaken.

2010 NITF PRIORITY 1. AUDIT OF EXISTING & POTENTIAL PRESENTERS FOR NATIONAL INDIGENOUS TOURING CIRCUIT

Merindah Donnelly, Collette Brennan and Fenn Gordon reported on the progress of the Blaklines, the National Indigenous Touring Circuit: Performing Lines has won the tender to set up and manage Blaklines with the support of a committee of producers and presenters consisting of Rachael Maza-Long, Kyle Morrison, Wesley Enoch, Peter Owen and Anne-Marie Heath; emerging Indigenous producer Erica McCalman has been appointed by Performing Lines to be mentored as part of that process; an audit of tour ready work is in process and the touring consortia will be established with the intention of touring one dance and one theatre work annually to between 5 and 15 venues.

2010 NITF PRIORITY 2. DEVELOPMENT OF A NATIONAL INDIGENOUS PLAYWRIGHTS CONFERENCE / INDIGENOUS PRACTICES CONFERENCE

Fred Copperwaite and Lily Shearer from Mooghalin Theatre reported on the progress of Indigenous Playwrights Conference: they have secured \$50,000 from the Australia Council to start the planning of the conference; Colin Kinchela and Sonny Dallas Law are both on the Steering Committee with Lily Shearer advising and they will soon call for interest in further participation for the Steering Committee as they want representation across all states/territories.

David Milroy reported on discussion with Playwriting Australia who agree that a conference/festival that reflects new Indigenous theatre is needed. PWA will support this process as it evolves and have offered to provide 2 dramaturgs/directors; possible timeline is January 2013 to be part of Sydney Festival; Rhoda Roberts is the new Chair of Playwriting Australia.

2010 NITF PRIORITY 3. INVESTIGATE AND NETWORK NATIONAL AND INTERNATIONAL PHILANTHROPY OPPORTUNITIES

Sam Cook reported that this area is still a work-in-progress. However, she reports that state and federal departments are working together to support artists and communities, as well as organisations to develop philanthropic skills and partnerships. Ie. The Philanthropy 101 workshops in communities, the support of Arts Support and ABAF, Ilbijerri being shortlisted for an Arts Support Relationships Manager, the success of crowdfunding for some projects, and the 'Associate Producers' strategy employed by Sydney Festival to secure individual donors for 'I am Eora'.

2010 NITF PRIORITY 4. DOCUMENTATION & DISTRIBUTION OF PROTOCOLS

While this area is a work-in-progress it was acknowledged a) it needs to be led by Indigenous cultural leaders b) there is documentation of a range of protocols in different places and c) that distribution remains an issue, not only in terms of written protocols but also in sharing them as 'tools' with colleagues in non-Indigenous organisations, thereby encouraging ongoing 'mindfulness' of protocols. It remains a project to collect the information and make it accessible from one source. Some examples of existing documentation around protocols:

- Indigelab proposed protocols that have been adopted by Arts NSW cohering around: Voice, Investment, Leadership, Respect, Ownership
- ATSIAB protocols cohere around: Principle, Policy, Practice and People
- IATSI, Artists in the Black (Arts Law), Australian Society of Authors and Australian Copyright Centre all have researched and published protocols for collaboration with Indigenous artists and communities.

2010 NITF PRIORITY 5. SCOPING STRATEGIES FOR RECRUITMENT OF YOUNG ARTISTS

This is also a work in progress but updates from the group included:

- ACPA has introduced its Certificate 2 Foundation Course in Performing Arts and is working to deliver it in schools and communities; is negotiating with DET and DEWHA who are interested in employment pathways; are adapting the Former Origin Greats (FOGS) program to offer kids in schools opportunities to perform with arts heroes.
- National networking of VCA, NAISDA, Eora, ACPA, QUT, WAAPA etc. urgently needed.
- Support for young artists through Artstart, Jumpstart and other mentoring programs needs auditing.
- At the 'talent identification' end of the spectrum ATYP, Eora, Connect-Ed, Kururu and others are working but employment support needs attention.
- The Australia Council Emerging Indigenous Producers attracted 22 applications of which 4 were appointed (Josh Bond/QPAC, Lara Croyden/QTC, Alison Murphy-Oates/Performance Space, Rosealee Pearson/UTP & Belvoir)
- The approach to Emerging Indigenous Producers needs to be repeated with as much energy and resources for several other areas including set designers, lighting designers, production managers etc.
- Need to keep in mind supporting/developing the artists who 'cross over' into administration/management, especially artists/dancers in the community.

PRESENTATION ON NATIONAL CULTURAL POLICY DISCUSSION PAPER

Sally Basser from the Office of the Arts, Department of Prime Minister and Cabinet, introduced delegates to the National Cultural Policy discussion paper with its ten-week timeframe for consultation/discussion. She indicated that the policy is likely to be finalized in the first half of 2012. She said the document is intended as a 'context-setting conversation' to build a ten-year vision for the arts, cultural and creative industries. Its goals are to:

- Ensure that what the Government supports — and how this support is provided — reflects the diversity of a 21st century Australia, and protects and supports Indigenous culture;
- Encourage the use of emerging technologies and new ideas that support the development of new artworks and the creative industries, and that enable more people to access and participate in arts and culture;
- Support excellence and world-class endeavour, and strengthen the role that the arts play in telling Australian stories both here and overseas;
- Increase and strengthen the capacity of the arts to contribute to our society and economy.

OTHER PRESENTATIONS

Jane Hayley from Australian Business and the Arts Foundation (ABAF) briefed participants on their advocacy work in the business sector, their capacity building with Advice and Board Bank and their Australian Cultural Fund. Independent practitioners without Gift Recipient Status can register with ABAF to receive donations (usually from known donors) to ensure donations are tax deductible. ABAF have processed 1.6 million in donations to artists through this program.

Fiona Winning from Australian Theatre Forum briefed participants on the upcoming forum in Brisbane and invited participation from NITF. It was agreed that: an update from NITF will be developed by John Harvey; a 'Postcard from the Future' will be done by Nadine Dowd and blog entries will be written by Lara Croyden, Alison Murphy-Oates and Rosealee Pearson.

Fred Copperwaite and Lily Shearer presented more on the Playwrights Conference/Festival after meeting with participants through the course of the forum.

- Steering committee to include: Marcus Hughes, Rachael Maza-Long, Deon Hastie, David Milroy, Josh Bond, Irma or Kyle from Yirra Yaakin, Rosealee Pearson, Andrea James & Fred Copperwaite.
- Carriageworks has offered their space for the event.
- There will be a planning meeting on September 24/25 and Playwriting Australia (both Chris Mead and Rhoda Roberts will be invited) and a follow up on Nov 18/19.
- A scoping study of Indigenous Playwrights will be undertaken.
- A flexible model will be developed for an event to take place in January 2013.
- Non-Indigenous organisations encouraged to commission work to coincide with event and premiered plays are eligible for work-shopping as they may need more work.
- Steering committee will decide if non-Indigenous artists are involved.
- State funding bodies to be notified so they are aware of dialogue and plans.

Vera Ding informed participants that Arts Queensland has committed to the supporting NITF for the next four years. It was suggested that every second year of the forum focus on practice and alternate years on policy and strategy development.

Sam Cook, John Harvey and David Milroy read their draft to date of the response to the National Cultural Policy. It begins by affirming the Cairns Consensus and acknowledging cultural continuum. It will affirm Indigenous Australia as central to Australian identity and call for recognition of dispossession and cultures within cultures. It will articulate that health and well-being are linked to culture and culture to land. Sam, David and John will circulate draft to NITF participants for comment in early October.

OPEN SPACE & PLANNING PROCESS

With the aim of optimizing participation and commitment of the sector, Wesley and Lee-Ann used the Open Space Technology¹ again, as a means of conducting an open discussion where participants drive the agenda for discussion and collectively prioritise action. Participants were invited to raise urgent questions/issues and to convene discussions around each area.

Seventeen groups met for brief discussion after which Wesley and Lee-Ann met with delegates to cluster these topics into four streams of discussion, inquiry & planning: Career Pathways, Practice, Market/s and National Cultural Policy.

Progressing through the key areas, participants were asked to develop actions under each of these headings, report back to the group and vote on the top five priorities.

1. CAREER PATHWAYS encompassing open space topics: Training Artists Our Way; Training Pathways; Peer Support Networks; Gaps in the Sector; Hats'n'Shoes (Indigenous Practitioners wearing many hats & standing in many shoes)

2. PRACTICE encompassing open space topics: What Defines ATSI Theatre; Honest Critique & Standards of Work; Community Stories: Ownership & Acknowledgement

¹ Wesley referenced this website www.openspaceworkshop.com

3. MARKET/S encompassing open space topics: Cultural Landscape: Our place in it; Audience & Artmaking: Urban & Remote; Spaces for making & touring work; Presenter Buy In: How do we get it; Representation of First Peoples at Long Paddock, Festivals etc.; What is Tour Ready; Commerciality: Making work that sells; Creative Funding Models

4. NATIONAL CULTURAL POLICY encompassing open space topic: Draft Response to the Cultural Policy Discussion Paper

RECURRING ISSUES

Some recurring issues across the weekend included:

- There is still an urgent need to discuss issues around “what is ATSI Theatre?”
- There is a need for networking of educators of Indigenous theatre practitioners to audit what’s on offer and share approaches to teaching non-Western methodologies.
- There are few opportunities for training and pathways for career development of Indigenous artworkers – managers, designers, technical and production staff
- Cultural training and distribution of protocols is needed for artworkers and funders for all organisations working with Indigenous communities.
- That Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and culture must be the beginning point and central (not marginal) to the formulation of a National Cultural Policy – providing a platform for the country to articulate a national cultural policy that is inclusive of a diverse range of cultures and peoples.

THE PRIORITISED OUTCOMES

1. Formalise Indigenous Performing Arts Training Alliance (IPATA) – a working/research group to meet within next 6 months to: scope sector and cultural modes of Indigenous performing arts training.

WHO: Marcus Hughes, Liza-Mare Syron and Fred Copperwaite

2. Develop Industry Standards around ownership and acknowledgement.

WHO: John Harvey, Rachael Maza-Long and Wesley Enoch

3. Submission to the National Cultural Policy to include the application of the 10-year commitment to Indigenous Theatre similar to the AFC/Screen Australia development model for Indigenous filmmakers.

WHO: Sam Cook, David Milroy, Merindah Donnelly and Erica McCalman

4. Commerciality – build relationships between commercial producers and Indigenous theatre makers: with a networking event at APAM and Major Performing Arts Centres having a standing agenda item at their meetings to discuss Indigenous theatre works of scale.

WHO: Rhoda Roberts, Lily Shearer and Deb Murphy

5. Create a black on black annual publication (like Artlink's annual Indigenous issue) that publishes responses to/dialogue about Indigenous performing arts, theatre & dance – perhaps in partnership with Realtime, Griffith Review or other existing publication.

WHO: Andrea James, Alison Murphy-Oates and Liza-Mare Syron

ALL RECOMMENDATIONS FROM EACH GROUP

CAREER PATHWAYS

1. *Formalise Indigenous Performing Arts Training Alliance (IPATA) – a working/research group to meet within next 6 months to: scope sector and cultural modes of Indigenous performing arts training (PRIORITY 1)*
2. Advocate for place on National Education/Curriculum Forum
3. Partner with arts organisations to deliver Indigenous training
4. Create an online presence to build networking in the sector

PRACTICE

1. Dialogue with Writers Guild about Indigenous content – acknowledgement, copyright and community control
2. Compile case studies that outline how copyright, acknowledgement, royalties and community control was addressed in theatre projects (both good and bad practice)
3. *Develop Industry Standards around ownership and acknowledgement. (PRIORITY 2)*
4. *Create a black on black annual publication (like Artlink's annual Indigenous issue) that publishes responses to/dialogue about Indigenous performing arts, theatre & dance – perhaps in partnership with Realtime, Griffith Review or other existing publication. (PRIORITY 5)*
5. Skill up emerging artists in the areas of Intellectual Property and Copyright, acknowledgement etc.
6. Establishment of a Clubhouse or Theatre Club (based on Book Clubs) that create a forum for dialogue around Indigenous theatre and issues.

MARKET

1. Crowdsourcing: Recommend to Australia Council and State Arts bodies to explore recommending crowd sourcing for projects that don't quite make it to being funded. Support portal for Crowdsourcing
2. Recommend to Artsupport to do an audit of crowdsourcing and other philanthropic initiatives for Indigenous practitioners
3. *Commerciality – build relationships between commercial producers and Indigenous theatre makers: with a networking event at APAM and Major Performing Arts Centres having a standing agenda item at their meetings to discuss Indigenous theatre works of scale. (PRIORITY 4)*
4. Develop a touring etiquette for venues, Blaklines Touring Committee to develop in consultation with communities.
5. Innovative educational workshops in marketing and community engagement to be delivered at Australia Council's annual marketing summit
6. Relationship building between producers and presenters eg. APAM Indigenous networking night, APACA 2015 Indigenous focus?

NATIONAL CULTURAL POLICY

1. *Submission to the National Cultural Policy to include the application of the 10-year commitment to Indigenous Theatre similar to the AFC/Screen Australia development model for Indigenous filmmakers. (PRIORITY 3)*