

1-1-2000

## **Drama praxis : Rural arts workers and lifelong learning : a phenomenological study**

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**DRAMA PRAXIS: RURAL ARTS WORKERS AND LIFELONG LEARNING  
A PHENOMENOLOGICAL STUDY**

by

S.E. Gibson (B. Ed.)

A Thesis submitted in partial fulfillment  
of the requirements for the award of  
Master of Education (Drama)

at the Faculty of Education,  
Edith Cowan University.

Submission date: August, 2000

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## **ABSTRACT**

The purpose of this study is to explore and describe the experiences of a specific group of arts workers in an isolated rural community in the South West of Western Australia.

These participants have all worked in the community as arts workers for an extended period of time. Through phenomenological research, the telling of these workers' stories, it is anticipated that the research will highlight, strengthen and enrich the political and economic positions of these workers.

The study is based on the assumptions and pre-conceptions that geographical and cultural isolation contributes to significant problems and situations such as communication that the workers can have when organising, co-ordinating and funding community arts projects. The current theories of 'lifelong learning' are discussed and evidenced through the experience of the research participants.

Although generalisations are not appropriate based on form, style and philosophical paradigm of this research, certain implications are evidenced through the participants responses, opinions and experiences.

The study is conducted within a qualitative research paradigm.

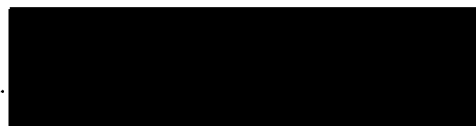
Phenomenology is the methodology used in this study. As such the lived experiences and perceptions of the research participants are described.

Open-ended interviews were conducted.

## **DECLARATION**

I certify that this thesis does not incorporate without acknowledgement any material previously submitted for a degree or diploma in any institution of higher education: and that to the best of my knowledge and belief it does not contain any material previously published or written by another person except where due reference is made in the text.

Signature..



Date..... 16 . 3 . 01 .....

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I wish to thank my supervisor, Mr Tarquam McKenna for his support, assistance and advice with the development and execution of this research study. His willingness to listen and constructively advise were very important to me.

I also wish to thank the nine participants involved in this research, who gave of their own time . Their enthusiastic involvement and co-operation was greatly appreciated. I wish to acknowledge their contribution to my learning through this research study.

Finally, thank you to my family and friends especially Nirala Hunt and Robin Juniper for encouraging me throughout this research. Their ability to give practical assistance and remain helpful in times of stress helped to make this research a valuable and worthwhile endeavour.

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## **CHAPTER 1**

### **INTRODUCTION**

This research project examines the experiences of a group of arts workers resident in a country town, and geographically isolated from their colleagues in the field of creative and performing arts. The study was a response to a lack of literature and related studies on regional arts workers despite the fact that most rural Western Australian towns show evidence of the activities of such a body of people. It is hoped that the data obtained from this research will result in these workers becoming more politically, socially and economically viable and was intended that participation in the research project would extend and enrich the circumstances of these people. The following document outlines the significance and background of the research, gives a brief review of the literature and outlines the theoretical framework of the study. The proposed methodology of investigation include sampling of interviews, analysis and observation. Ethical issues were taken into account and are described as are limitations.

### **BACKGROUND AND SIGNIFICANCE**

This study has implications for the individuals concerned and for the wider community. While recent trends over recent years show there has been a surge in the development of the arts in rural communities, the information accessed for this study shows that further research is important if rural arts bodies and workers are to survive. A recent statement (Communications Audit Report 1997) surveyed at a Country Arts Conference says many regional residents express strongly a` demand for improved communications services`

along with a need for regional communities to `work together to ensure high quality, affordable communications access.` In 1996 the Arts Council of Australia decided that it needed to reassess its organisation and to reconsider its long term goals and objectives. Their mission statement is `for the Arts to be a vibrant and significant part of life in regional Australia` (Country Arts : Art Torque, Oct.1997 p.3.)

Clearly the need to explore potentially more effective ways for regional arts workers to communicate and share knowledge regularly is critical. This researcher`s hypothesis is that the decrease in isolation of these workers will positively influence the betterment of the arts in the community.

### **Significance**

The arts have a chequered history in rural towns in Western Australia. Currently there is a trend towards an upsurge in assistance and planning for the future of the arts in country Western Australia. However, this document records key experiences inherent in long-term geographical isolation. In exploring these key experiences via questions the research objectives were to:

- describe the experiences of isolated arts workers currently working in a rural community. identify key experiences and patterns of understanding
- discover the elements that contribute to the formation of closer networks and communications.
- interpret the shared meanings of the experiences of these arts workers.
- use the information gained to contribute to the new knowledge currently being researched on country arts networkers.
- identify how the shared experiences of these arts workers are foreshadowed by lifelong learning.

In summary this study aimed to uncover some of the truth surrounding the `lot` of isolated arts workers through the use of a phenomenological approach to information gathering which focuses on the essence of the experience for these workers overall. In

addition, this researcher hoped to validate their experiences via participation in the research project and, as has previously been stated, improve their positions and flexibility within their communities, `close the gap` between them and other worker areas in the rural community, and between rural communities overall.

## CHAPTER 2

### CONTEXTS OF THE STUDY

#### LIFELONG LEARNING AND COMMUNITY-BASED EDUCATION

##### **Definition**

The term lifelong learning is often unclear and some of the world's largest authorities on the subject have given such broad, encompassing definitions as to include just about everything and everybody. For instance the organisation by the name of ELLI (European Lifelong Learning Initiative) states that: 'Lifelong learning is a continuously supportive process which stimulates and empowers individuals to acquire all the knowledge values, skills and understandings they will require throughout their lifetimes and to apply them with confidence, creativity and enjoyment in all roles, circumstances and environments.' (1994, p5)

The search for a clear definition goes on and especially in relation to and including the arts and how it can be a vehicle for lifelong learning. The shared adventure of lifelong learning through the arts undertaken by students and educators in a collaborative manner becomes more important and thus the theory of a journey undertaken together seems crucial to the process of bringing about lasting conceptual changes in the learner.

Unfortunately many of the available publications on lifelong learning are from the disciplines of sociology, political science or economics and are not an arts model. This then poses the question as to whether in the current climate there is a recognition of the value of arts education and its place in lifelong learning.

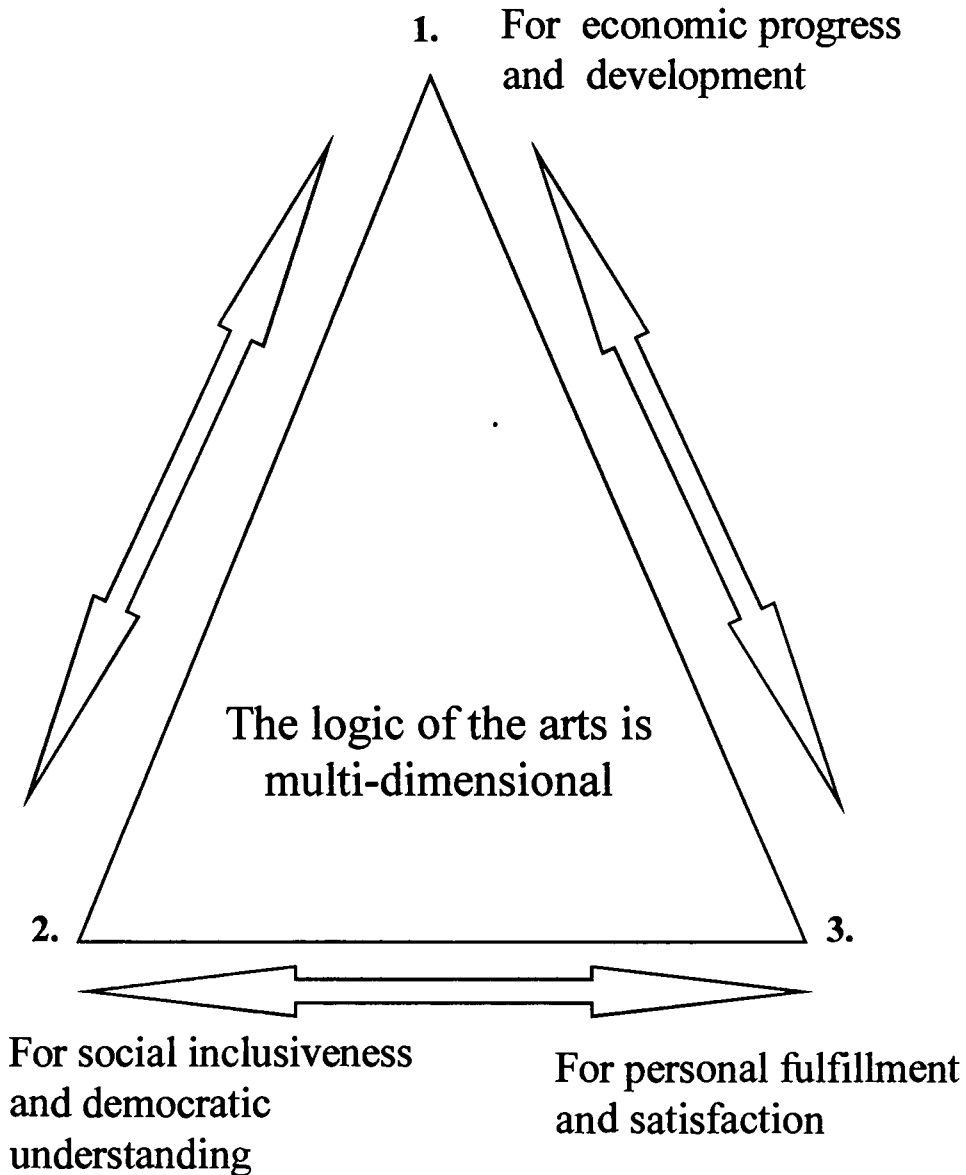
The opportunity of including the arts in projects aimed at lifelong learning education should not be overlooked. The arts stretch the imagination, increase critical understanding and creativity therefore adding to many of the aspects needed for lifelong learning to occur.

Judith Renyi in her article 'The Arts and Humanities in American Education' (1994, p. 438) writes 'When teachers, historians, artists, parents and others join forces to produce new understandings of the human condition, then powerful learning takes place in the schools. Learning is always provisional - a landmark in a lifelong journey that school helps every American begin.' In discussing the phenomenon of lifelong learning, McKenna (1997, p. 11) stated that: 'genuine lifelong learning requires a transformation of inner human nature.' This transformation can be achieved through the arts. All the creative tools for developing lifelong skills are generally acknowledged by theorists to be contained in art forms. These include such forms as music, theatre and visual art. Research and theory suggest that evidence of this has re-emerged in recent academic studies.

Chapman and Aspin (1997 p.179) state 'the artist can serve as a model of the lifelong learner, continually striving for new means of communicating or extending the use of a particular medium, continually extending the boundaries in which they operate, looking for new experiences to extend themselves and new networks of possible meanings in which they explore the expanding boundaries of the worlds they create. The quintessential artist is the best example of a person involved in lifelong learning.'

## DIAGRAM 1

### THE TRIADIC NATURE OF LIFELONG LEARNING



Based on Aspin, D. & Chapman, J. D. (1997)



## **Integrating the Arts**

Many Australian schools have begun to recognise the importance of the arts in their curriculum although for so long the arts have been looked upon as a 'frill' with the consequence that serious study of the arts in schools was significantly undermined by the limits of most education systems. However, in recent times the fostering of deeper learning is the focus of many new education programmes presented to schools. These programmes emphasise an holistic approach to learning and include the arts as an integral part of the syllabus. There are a number of studies (Johnston, no date; Galbraith, 1995) that demonstrate why teachers and other educators need to focus on adopting instructional strategies which foster deeper learning and lifelong learning. In discussing such strategies, Johnston (no date, p.2) suggests that 'to avoid frustration there needs to be a change in the conceptions of both the student and the teacher in relation to their respective roles.' Therefore an integrated, holistic process would develop where the teacher and students approach learning as a journey and an adventure taken together where the boundaries are extended and a merging of common goals takes place.

## **Community-Based Education**

Within the realms of lifelong learning and arts education community-based education has a very important part to play. Many community type activities are centred around the arts, music, theatre groups, visual arts, creative writing courses and book clubs to name a few. This study further examines the connection between community-based education and lifelong learning, as well as adult learners and their understanding of the phrase 'lifelong learning.'

Recent research (Galbraith, 1995; Chapman, 1997; Perrin, 1994)

has indicated that one of the major challenges for the proponents of lifelong learning will be the education of the individual with regard to the inclusion of learning for life skills in self-education activities. For example, this could include encouraging the pursuit of quality leisure activities, a more constructive use of free time and the provision of more opportunities for more appreciation and engagement in cultural activities.

### **Holistic Education**

In a report from a think tank issued by the Nordic Council of Ministers in 1995 it is stated that 'Folkeoplysning (adult education) achieved a virtually unique position of dominance and gained a firm foothold in every corner of Nordic society. It gradually covered a broad spectrum ... Folkeoplysning also exerted an influence on primary education, vocational training and on the entire sphere of adult education.' (1995, p.19)

The value of community-based education as a way of teaching and enhancing life skills is recognised in many other countries, but the concept of this kind of education as equally important as school-based education is relatively new. Against a background of recent research which indicates that society is in danger of succumbing to technological dehumanisation, research in holistic lifelong learning points out the need for alternative outlets in the community outlets that teach life skills.

The 'new-age' movement is an aspect of this rebellion against technological dehumanisation. This movement, with its myriad of personal development courses on offer throughout the modern world, is a rich and valuable place to start looking at ways of teaching life skills and personal development; the New Age emphasis on self-motivation, for instance, is the main thrust of the folkeoplysning movement that the Nordic Council describes in *Golden Riches in the Grass* (1995, p.19). The Council stresses the importance of eliminating distinctions (p. 73) between vocational type training and personal growth and also implies that there are other distinctions that need

to be eliminated between informal and formal education: between the arts, humanities, and the natural sciences.

### **Contribution to the Workplace**

Lifelong learning aims to bridge these gaps and to forge links between the workplace and the many different types of learning organisations. It aims to change the attitudes of employers and managers in the workplace so that informal education has a status equal to formal education, so that these lifetime-learned skills and qualifications become recognised by corporate companies and other employers. Further, workplaces may then be considered as centres for lifelong learning, not just centres for increasing productivity.

Therefore an integrated, holistic process would develop where the teacher and students approach learning as a journey and an adventure taken together where the boundaries are extended and a merging of common goals takes place.

### **Multiple Resources and Technology**

Technology has become a major component in bringing about lifelong learning opportunities and in this age of computer-assisted learning, the acquisition of multi-media resources is important for all communities, especially rural ones. In discussing the use of technology and lifelong learning, Galbraith (1995) claims that 'the uses and applications of new technologies to improve (education) program effectiveness and (to enhance) learning is imperative for a futuristic perspective to emerge in the advancement and enhancement of lifelong learning opportunities.' (p.24) He also talks about 'reducing the phobias' (p.24) attached to the use of technology. Here life attitudes such as higher self-esteem, motivation and an increase in confidence levels would be beneficial. It is acknowledged that many of the skills needed for lifelong learning can be developed through the arts, not the least the three basic qualities mentioned above.

## **Lifelong Learning for All**

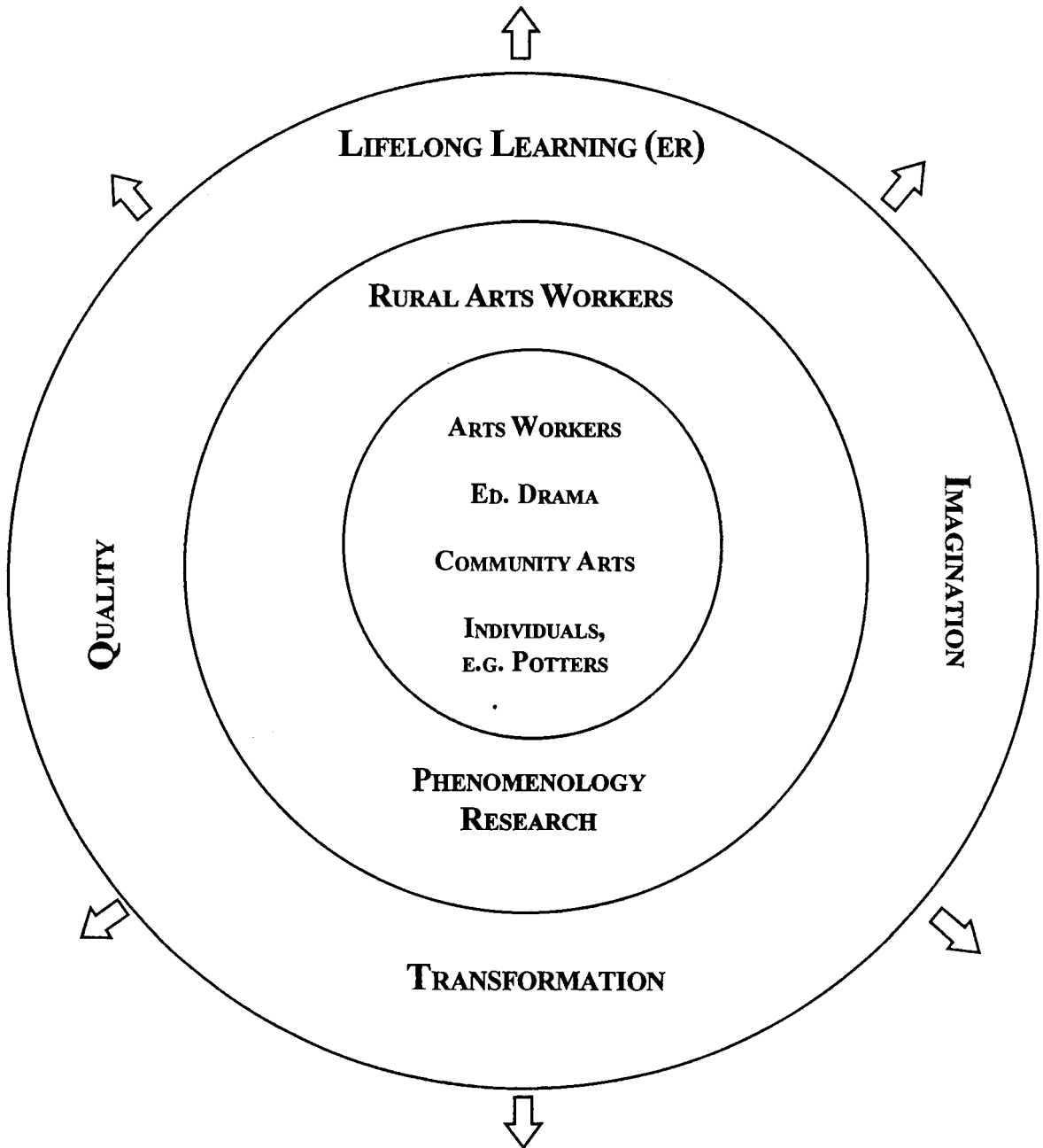
The idea that society becomes a lifelong learning place for everybody is a vision that proponents of lifelong learning have envisaged and towards which they have initiated international campaigns through the media and at conferences all over the world. The report from the first global conference on lifelong learning included the following four basic assumptions which underpinned the planning for the conference as a whole (An action agenda for Lifelong Learning for the 21st Century. 1994, p.6.):

1. Men and women, animated by the human spirit have a wide range of aspirations and interests that can be advanced by learning.
2. It ought to be easy rather than difficult for people to move in and out of quality learning opportunities throughout their lifetime.
3. The welfare of nations and the world in these times depends upon the creation of learning societies.
4. The learning society will not happen by itself. It must be made to happen through purposeful and sustained efforts by those who are its proponents.

Such a shared vision of lifelong learning for all can be the glue that is the interconnection between schools, families and communities. Amalgamation and integration within communities is vital for this as is an awareness and understanding of the need for partnership between different learning organisations - encouraged by the whole community.

This study will demonstrate that rural arts workers have a significant contribution to make to the development of lifelong learning in regional communities.

**DIAGRAM 2**  
**THREADS AND THEMES**



## CHAPTER 3

### CRITICAL LITERATURE REVIEW

In the area of rural arts workers the researcher has also looked at related studies. This review does not aim to provide comprehensive findings as the researcher does not wish to provide a definitive account of findings until after the data analysis. The researcher wishes to remain open to emergent findings within the fieldwork although the literature will be reviewed during the study to check recent theoretical frameworks and methodologies. As this research is phenomenological in nature, it is based on the participants' 'lived' experiences. Therefore, the purpose of this review is to provide insights into related issues.

A study conducted by Prentki (1996) highlighted the fact that arts facilitators and co-ordinators engender 'cross-fertilisation' between social, political and economic realities. They need to be given the space to 'represent and articulate these possibilities' and it is important that the community understands the limitations faced by these workers. Training strategies for arts workers exist in many different institutions, but for an individual in an isolated community these courses are fairly inaccessible. Deldine (1996), Taylor (1996) and Abbs (1994) have explored the relationships between arts practitioners and the wider community, although there is a lack of studies that specifically looks at the issues of geographically isolated arts workers and this study may provide insights into discovering how the workers perceive their position in relation to this.

Cultural Planning for Country W.A. (Ministry for Culture and the Arts) states that 'Cultural Planning will provide the Arts Portfolio Agencies with better information about the needs of country communities and assist them to plan better for the provision of their

services to country W.A.` (1995 p.10). This document is concerned with the use of existing resources and aims to involve Local Government in developing more strategic approaches and better communications with arts agencies and individual workers.

### **Definition of Community**

Galbraith (1995, p.4) states that `community` is a value-laden term that evokes a variety of descriptions by a diverse range of individuals (Bellah et al. 1985; Effrat, 1974; Galbraith, 1990a, 1992a; Luloff and Swanson, 1990; Moore and Feldt, 1993; Warren and Lyon, 1988). He also talks about all the diverse communities and how they can be based on such combinations such as demographic, psychographic, locational and non-locational. For the purpose of this study the researcher will use the word `community` as a broad-based term describing a town in the rural South-West of Western Australia. The community in this study comprises a variety of diverse cross-sections of the population living in the town and outlying areas.

### **History**

The emergence of various organisations and practitioners concerned with improving community arts and the conditions for arts workers is a fairly recent development in most areas of Australia and indeed probably other countries as well. Community arts has in many rural communities been the territory of the local government or council and in many places it still is to a large extent therefore the local governments have created boundaries and placed hidden and invisible limitations on much of what is presented to the community itself.

In 1987 a change occurred within The Australia Council and community arts became Community Cultural Development although the name Community Arts is still widely in

use across Australia even though this title is technically used only to describe all practices prior to 1987. The term Community Cultural Development was coined to broaden and enrich the boundaries of community arts and to focus on aspects such as cultural diversity and radical innovation which previously may have had little importance within some communities. The idea of community empowerment was also a focus of this change.

In discussing community arts, Hawkins (1993) is quoted at the Brisbane Symposium (1999. p. 18) as saying that `Community Arts in Australia is an invention of government - one of a myriad of Whitlam government initiatives aimed broadly at democratic reform and enacted through the adaptable concept of community.`

So, while community arts was previously determined by what was being funded it continued to grow in ways that were more or less not under any specific government guidelines therefore making some aspects of community arts difficult to describe or categorise. It also posed a challenge to the mainstream artist industry or `elite` arts and this may still be the case especially in rural areas.



## **CHAPTER 4**

### **An Initial Conceptual Framework and Methodology**

1. The conceptual framework or strategy used for this study was based on the constructivist paradigm.
2. The framework was appropriate to the research project which involved participants from a variety of backgrounds and with shared experiences.

The constructivist paradigm may have its limitations - eg. the problem of the constructed nature of the researchers' own approach and the asymmetries of power that can occur. However, this study seeks to affirm not just the participants' positions as arts workers but also the position of the researcher, who is also an arts worker and, in turn will have a greater significance in stating the goals of the arts for this community.

This thesis is therefore a reflection on practice, a review of current understanding and a discussion of the researcher's own immersion in the arts community. The reader will recognise shifts in 'style' of writing which reflect the practitioners varied roles.

### **Research Design**

#### **The Design:**

The design of this study was based on a model of action research; it utilized a mixed approach to data collection. Participants' observations were recorded and focus group interviews were carried out. Observations were random and occurred during fieldwork over the course of several weeks. The two focus group interviews were held in an informal setting in the Community Organic Gardens meeting room.

**The Setting:**

The district from which the samples were selected is considered a fairly affluent area of the Lower South-West of Western Australia. A number of different sectors comprise the population of approximately eight thousand people. An additional sector includes a transient majority of tourists, surfers and seasonal workers. There are 1 million tourist visitors to this region annually. The name of the town and the participants in this study have been omitted in order to maintain anonymity.

**The Subjects:**

The subjects were randomly selected from the different sectors of the population who have resided in the town for approximately five years and who could be described as locals.

**Ethical Considerations:**

The main ethical considerations in this study was the collection of data from local identities. Therefore it was essential that each participant signed a consent form which stated, before any research was carried out, what the `researcher` would be doing in regards to field observations, case studies, informal and formal interviews (Consent Form, see Appendix ii).

**CHAPTER 5**

**REPORT ON**

**INTERVIEWS IN QUALITATIVE ARTS RESEARCH**

The following interviews were intended to describe and compare the participants' involvement with various social and cultural groups, where they overlapped and where any conflict lay between these various groups. The researcher wanted to examine the 'real' experiences, emotions and feelings of these participants regarding organisation, co-ordination and collaboration between arts councils, arts groups and individuals.

In summary the researcher was vitally interested in the different kinds of art that had occurred in the town, the support it received over the years and possible suggestions for the future of the arts in the region.

The techniques used by the researcher included qualitative methods in the form of minimally structured interviews of about twenty minutes duration. The interviews were mainly informal and the researcher used some prompts where necessary. A combination of narrative and semi-structured interviews facilitated communication.

Opportunities were provided for the respondent to explore and more importantly, reflect on their involvement and their concern with the arts in their town, and possibilities for changes. Potential sources of bias were avoided and the researcher was aware that the line of questioning had to be positive and neutral.

Two focus group interviews also occurred. Written responses to specific questions were also employed as an additional process of data collection. The responses by the participants based upon this methodological paradigm are considered to be true and relevant constructions of meaning for this study's purpose. The research participants were nine adults; male and female, whose perspectives and learning are explored as the focus of this study.

They were invited to provide detailed information on all aspects of their involvement in the arts, ranging from personal experiences to general experiences. Personal opinions were welcomed but not commented on by the researcher. This neutral role of researcher allowed for honest, 'up-front' musings and reflection.

Pertinent areas for further investigation include an underlying hypothesis that the arts in the study town fluctuate according to the qualities of individuals involved in organisation and co-ordination. The results indicate the value of further exploration of the involvement of the shire council, the lapsed theatre group and the possibility that these groups could work together in a more productive way. The issue of "moral support" was suggested by the data to be of significance to this group of community arts workers. The group were eager to examine what constituted moral support.

The results suggest the value of action to follow up these interviews and further analysis and data collection. The life histories of the participants could be further investigated in relation to their involvement. Particular questions worth further examination are:

- Why did they get involved?
- Through what channels?
- What was their motivation?

The mainly narrative interviews cast light upon such issues as the influence of outside arts bodies and Government Departments, and the rapidly growing population within the district. These aspects bear further investigation in regard to the development of the arts in this region.

## **INTERVIEWS**

### **INTERVIEW 1**

I        What has been your experience of the arts in ....?

R        I've been the secretary for eight years and now I'm the performing arts Touring Manager and I helped set up the Friends of the Arts Council - is that the information you want - maybe I should give you a bit of background.

I        Yes, that would be lovely.

R        I came to ... 10 years ago and I'm a nurse and do shift work so couldn't be involved in anything structured or during the day and love the arts, so chose to join the Arts Council - I can't sing or dance or sculpt but wanted to give something back.

I        I bet you can do some of those things. I bet you've got hidden talents somewhere.

R        No it's true, ask ... .

I        Can you tell me more about the Arts Council itself and what it does.

R        It's a totally voluntary organisation with ten committee members and 110 friends. We facilitate whatever the district asks us to do, what they demand. We are involved in performing arts, the visual arts. We get lumbered with the things that aren't

commercially viable for anyone else. We are linked with the Gordon Reid Foundation and the Lotteries Commission. Each show we bring can cost up to three thousand dollars.

I        Could you tell me about an experience you've had in country Arts Council - one that you'll never forget.

R        Yes! The Shostakovich String Quartet - we desperately wanted to have a string quartet but the famous group were going to cost four or five thousand dollars so a lot of bribery and corruption went on. We offered them a holiday in ... and the show ended up costing two thousand dollars. We ended up accommodating these four big Russians and showing them around .... I have never been kissed on the cheek so much or drunk so much champagne. These Russians paddled in the surf, poked their fingers into everything and on the night of the performance two hundred people came and Sacha got up at the end and said 'I do not wish to be immodest but the warmth of the people of ...has made us give our best performance we've ever done.' When I picked them up in Perth I realised we were double-parked and the grey ghost was lurking around - I asked Sacha 'Do you have parking meters in Moscow?' He said: 'They put them in three years ago and no-one put any money in so they took them away.'

I        (Laughing) I've got a tear in my eye.

R        Yes, I get a really warm feeling whenever I think about it. They were really taken with the jarrah furniture down here and one night my husband picked up a piece of Jarrah and threw it on the fire. I'll never forget the look of horror on all four faces.

I        Yes we live here and we can offer these people this beautiful place.

R Another famous artist I'll never forget loved caves. He's a famous classical pianist and I took him to the caves and he was so delighted because they are one of his loves. It's the human touches that count.

I Which group in the community have been targeted would you say?

R The senior citizens had Pot Pourri Theatre last year and this brought the oldies as well as the littlies together. They sang opera but it was suitable for all ages. Also the ABC show Monicas House was brought down for the children and that was a big hit.

I What about the twenty to forty age group?

R They're a hard audience to target. Difficult because of children and getting babysitters etc. We had 'Barmaids' a Deck Chair Theatre production through and that was well attended. Recently we had Helen Matthews and even though people are always asking for jazz, only a small number of people attended.

I Sounds like you know your audiences pretty well.

R Yes, I virtually know when something is going to be a flop. Out of the twelve shows we bring each year, two or three will flop. The Arts Council is clever though and we don't rely on the box office. We have a bank account which sees us through.

I How do you feel about the arts in ... today?

R It's vibrant and alive. The visual artists don't need us so much although when they do, to set up exhibitions etc., we're available to help.

I What suggestions could you make to further the arts in this district?



R More commitment from the people in .... A little moral support from the Shire. They don't have the time or the money but a bit of moral support wouldn't go astray. Are you sure this isn't going to be published?

I This is absolutely confidential.

R I know, I know (laughter). Yes, we were involved in writing the Cultural Policy document with the Shire last December and it hasn't been passed or tabled yet.

I So it hasn't been published either?

R No, it hasn't been passed or tabled yet. You know in most W.A. country towns sport is more important than the arts. I went to a conference recently and realized that there will be no sponsorship or anything until after the Olympic Games, the year 2000 because everyone's gearing up for sport.

I Yes, that's true, I hadn't thought about that.

I What kind of stress is involved in organising Regional Arts activities?

R Well, you know I really admire the sculptors, potters and artists we have here but they don't have a clue about getting organised - and they hate it. Yes, there's a lot of stress involved - the financial stress for instance then everyone's angry although we do have our ..... blanket and as I said we don't rely on the box office. Something always goes wrong, like the urn blowing up at the cultural centre. The people don't realise we are responsible for getting the new urn at the Cultural Centre. The bigger the star the easier to cope with though. It's the less famous ones who can be difficult.

I Ah, yes, the rising stars.

R Yes, but when you tell them that we're just volunteers they go quiet.

I What about local performing artists? Is there more or less than say ten years ago?

R Yes, several years ago there was an amateur theatre group doing a lot of shows, unfortunately they folded. No, there's not as much local content as we'd like but we do use them in other ways - for sound technicians.

I And as support acts?

R Yes, that as well but we'd like to see more local content - not the same things all the time though. We also give some grants to local schools to work on shows and to bring down artists so that the school itself can make a profit. For instance the Bread and Onions production a few months ago made two thousand dollars on the food for the Montessori School.

When we brought the W.A. Symphony Orchestra down, that cost us seventy thousand dollars but a few schools made money making the food for this concert. People don't realize what this entails and how the whole community benefits from a show like this. Just filling the buses up with petrol to take people everywhere - so everyone benefits from the petrol stations to the schools. Yes, it's the hidden things that people don't see.

I Yes, I know what you mean.

R We totalled up our volunteer hours a while ago and at \$10 an hour for each of us for a year it worked out to something like \$120,000 we could have in the bank!

I Thank you for your time, I really appreciated it. One more request. Could you suggest anyone else who could offer information on this topic?

R Yes, Mrs ..... She has been a member of the Arts Council for thirty years and even though she`s over eighty years old she always puts the chairs out for a concert but don`t tell her I told you that! She also made three hundred Anzac cookies for our Shoehorn Sonata production last year and she said she`ll never do that again. That was a fantastic show too.

I Thank you again for being so helpful. See you around town I`m sure.

## INTERVIEW 2

Arrived at appointed place, respondent and I greeted each other and she immediately started talking about her involvement with Youth Theatre.

I Well, you've almost answered my first question which was - tell me about your involvement with the arts in ....

R Well I have a broad involvement but theatre is my first love - and story-telling. I started ... Youth Theatre in 1990 and that went for five years. We did two plays a year targeting the 12-18 year old although we always had some young ones coming too - the 8-10 year olds. We were the first artists to use the building at the Community Resource Centre and had our base there for years until TAFE pushed us out which I was quite angry about. It was probably good in the long run but it wasn't right at the time. I was involved in setting up the Media club with ..... who was and still is into photographics. That didn't keep going because we were over- committed. I also did the Youth Arts Festival in 1992 which was a whole regional project involving different schools and several schools - Nannup, Busselton, Augusta and here. The Youth Theatre did a devised performance including puppetry. We also ran the Debating Club which involved young people with cameras and for this, which was unbelievable, we got some funding from the Department of Home and Family which was a Labour department and doesn't exist anymore.

I&R (Laughing) Government departments.

R I also worked with ..... who was instrumental in setting up many projects and we did all our own funding applications. My focus then was children and I wanted to put in

some groundwork with others rather than just the elite group that were in the Youth Theatre. They'd come a long way. Three of them ended up in the John Curtin um um.

I Performing Arts Course?

R Yes and two ended up at the Academy and one is now singing in a band. I'm a journalist and my interest is in story-telling so I started working with ..... at the library doing myths and guided activities where the children created their own myths from this century to take into the next century. You can learn a lot from last century's myths but the children are more interested in the contemporary myths.

I Do you know anything about the history of community theatre in ...?

R Yes, there's been a very strong Repertory Club - probably about ten years - all through the eighties. There's always been a very strong music culture . There was Red Socks street theatre. They had talent nights every Thursday night at the Tavern - rock one week - variety the next. They worked with ..... running children's theatre. It still exists but after ten years most of the old guard were burnt out. Last of these people had a go at doing small works but then that petered out. The beleaguered group and me went into story-telling. See, I came directly from the East Coast where big community events were all the go and I worked with Shop-front theatre. They had no concept of community arts at that stage. No-one had heard of it yet the place had huge potential. In Sydney there is so much bitching and competition, so this was like a new fresh palette to me. I was looking at skills development in the community . But in 1995 I stepped out because I was burnt out and wanted to help my husband in the business. So there was a lot of younger people in the theatre group and they did things like 'Hair ' and musicals - they were like ferrets. The singing group was strong and they'd sung a`capella together

for years. ....was at Nijindamurra and ..... put in a huge amount of effort. That was the whole nature of that school. We did joint fundraisers - my kids are at Montessori now.

I        Could you suggest some possibilities for expansion in the arts today?

R        Yes, a big Community Arts Festival and using outdoor areas. I've been an assistant co-ordinator and assistant director with .... and that is my dream. I would love to see that happen. The Wine and Food Festival should be the Wine, Food and Arts Festival.

I        Yes, I agree.

R        And the education of the Shire to do Art in the Park - you know the Memorial Park in town - it's a bit small though ... The Community Services Officers' Portfolio is huge. That position is only three years old and it involves Environment and Health. She sits on something like twenty eight committies. I've linked arms with her and we did the story-telling and we're doing something next year - and it's the first time the Shire is going to fund a project.

I        Really!

R        The Artist in Residence building at the Community Centre will be used and they probably won't come. They're not really educated. We were working on the Cultural Policy last year and it's still sitting on someone's desk and has been there for six months. Some councillors were educated after that. but the Spring Festival in the eighties, eighty-nine I think - was a disaster and the Shire got its' fingers burnt. Someone called ..... moved in and tried to attract outside acts. The locals wouldn't support this and it turned out to be a flop. The Council lost a lot of money. Talk to ..... about that.

I So what kind of stress have you encountered in your work as an organiser and co-ordinator?

R The demand of the people. You open the door and see ..... One person couldn't do it. I had a business and children, husband. Never had the support of the Council and there's no point in doing something if you're not committed. So, yes, accessing funding and education of the community. Children are the best to work with, they're so willing. It was a matter of balancing extra things on top of our partnership. We had a partner at the time and every time I went off, he gave me a hard time. I got heaps from him. We're not in a partnership with him anymore, thank God. I've made a five year commitment to the business and this is an Arts business anyway so I'm learning about management. We make the product without Government funding and it's bloody hard work.

I Beautiful glasswork.

R You learn how to manage and the maths of small business - lucky I've got a maths family. I'd much rather be doing my soul food. But you can't pretend anymore when you've got a family - the reality is how do you make an income? We've made a career out of our art. I do crave to write and create. I do an arts column on the ABC - Artefacts - and one month out of twelve Bookweek and I've got my story-telling.

I One last question then - would you say there is more or less community arts happening now than say ten years ago?

R I think we're in a bit of a valley. The theatre group is dispersed. The music culture is as strong as ever. No, there's not a lot happening. The role of the Arts Council is to bring theatre. It's not my taste.

I Could more suggestions be made to them?

R Yes. The new High School Theatre may also be the beginning of a new theatre culture. Have you been there?

I Yes, it's lovely.

R There's the amphitheatre too which is not ready yet. Memorial Park in town is a bit small. Oh, and the huge natural amphitheatre at Injidup. He's got a music studio out there - it's the perfect space. What's his name (asks someone) ..... Very private though and expensive. Also in house. He was required to give part of his land back so he gave it to the Aboriginal community. He's a loose cannon that one, does his own thing. I've written articles on the scattered community. There's been many attempts to get co-ops going. The old mill site is the best if you can get it. It's owned by CALM and ..... nearly got it for an arts festival. It's a huge site - the Rails to Trails goes through there. It has these magnificent super-structures. First they gave it to the back-packers - that fell through.

I Who manages it now?

R CALM. The CALM office is on top of the hill.

I I'll have to go and look at it. Well, that's about it. Thank you for your time and I hope we see each other around.

R Yes, better do some work.



### INTERVIEW 3

I Tell me about your involvement in the arts in ...

R Well I can only really tell you about the music side. Should I start with the Arts Council?

I Yes, that would be great.

R It was the early eighties and I was a founding member. We started with running art exhibitions and they were very successful. We were in one of the old premises in town but that was bought by some people who wanted to open an art gallery. That took away some of the popularity of an exhibition. We had people coming in from all over the state. Then ..... appeared and said I think I'd like to belong to this. You haven't met her yet?

I Yes, I met her briefly at a Country Arts meeting a couple of months ago.

R When she makes up her mind about something she makes it come to fruition.

I What about before she came along?

R We asked for representatives from the different groups, like the ballet. I was there as a representative because of the Choral Group. There was the CWA and the Repertory Club.

I Was this the early eighties or late seventies?

R Yes, I think it was the early eighties. Anyway we asked all the representatives to come. Some came, some didn't. We had a very good secretary. She was sending out brochures. We also encouraged exhibitions to come in from out of town. I've been President of the Arts Council too.

I Could you tell me about an experience you haven't forgotten - while you were President for instance.

R Well, you needn't write this down but I'll tell you if you like.

I It's perfectly okay, no-one else will see this other than my tutors at Uni.

R I can't even remember all the details. Someone was badly out of line at one of the meetings and I had to speak to her. Yes, I've forgotten a lot - later on I got a letter and I was very surprised to get a letter from this person.

I So would you say there was a lot of stress involved in your work on the Arts Council?

R No, not a lot of stress. It was hard work and you had to concentrate. The lady who was secretary opened her house to receive the paintings. We had to organise transport too. All that had to be arranged. I used to go and help. We had a very good President then. He's dead now. He had problems in his personal life. There's been more problems in recent years because we agree to promote, we think something will be good then it goes down the drain. If you're interested in this talk to ..... about it.

I Yes, I am.

R We haven't had many disasters though.

I How different is the Arts Council now to how it was run say ten years ago?

R Oh, vastly different. We haven't run an exhibition for a long time although ..... puts in lots of time and has the expertise. Even though where she got the time I don't know. It's really made it's mark. It's an institution and has made it's mark far and wide. It's much better known in the district and the country. .... goes to conferences and so on now.

I What would you suggest for the Arts Council to expand on today?

R I would like to see another art exhibition. We've got a lot of artists and craftpersons as we always have and the exhibition could embody craft. The Moondyne Group is very strong - there are all sorts of groups - Moondyne has always been well represented. It would be a lot of work. That would be a good thing.

I So what's the Arts Council like today?

R Alive and well from what I can gather.

I And your involvement in the arts now?

R The Choral Group is still going and we sing a variety of songs.

I If there was a community festival for instance, would you perform?

R Yes, we're in the throes of getting a performance together now. Shall I tell you about the Choral Group?

I Yes, I'd like to hear how that started.

R We came to ... from Dalwallinu. My husband came to manage the timber mill. I got some people together to sing a few Christmas carols and everyone said why don't you keep going. I wanted to know who was going to conduct - they said well, you. I had a father who used to conduct choirs. I'd never conducted before. We had our ups and downs. It was quite a good group. Shame that it fell to pieces. We did some Gilbert and Sullivan shows although travel was the thing. After a while the town got bigger and the teachers started to travel to Perth. Teachers have a lot to think about these days - so do the students. They're not as free. We've got the Principal of the High School in our choral group now. There's only about eight men, the rest are women. we enjoy what we do. Our coming performance is for the Silver Chain. we don't do this to help our own funds. We work for the community. As far as I'm concerned I started a choir in 1954 and it's still going even though it seems to fluctuate. Sometimes I ask myself what am I doing - it's been quite rewarding and we've won a lot of prizes - I'll show you a few later. I So if you put on a performance about how many people would you have?

R Probably 25-30 people.

I What are the ages roughly?

R We have a couple of 15 year olds and some my age - elderly. But we're fortunate to have some younger ones. They've got quite good voices - we don't get into rock and roll though, leave that to the bands. Yes, the average age is around the 50's I suppose.

I Could you tell me about a recent performance you've done?

R Have you heard about 'No Milk, No Honey'?

I Yes, I read about it in the local paper.

R Well, we were asked to go to the old mill site. The film was being set up down there. They gave me an old hat to wear. I saw the film because my son-in-law taped it from SBS. It's going to be shown here on GWN on the 12th October at 4.00pm. You must see it.

I I would love to. Did you perform in it?

R Oh, I laughed and laughed when I saw myself - yes, we performed briefly and you could only see a few people and I was one of them. The film company put it on at the Cultural Centre and 400 people went. I was so surprised when I walked in - the place was full and the supper was put on by Nijindamurra - wine and nibbles.

I Was it free?

R Yes, all put on by the film company, Electric Pictures.

I As a thank you to the people I suppose.

R Yes - all the families of the Group Settlements were there. The descendants from Busselton and Bunbury. It was a really good documentary.

I Thank you ..... for your time. I really appreciated it.

(We got up and spent about ten minutes looking at the trophies and prizes the Choral Group had been awarded and then she showed me her OAM.)

## **QUESTIONS FOR FOCUS GROUP INTERVIEWS**

1. What is your notion of lifelong learning?
2. How do various constituencies outside the formal education system and institutions of government see themselves as contributing to the goal of lifelong learning for all?
3. How is your art a vehicle for liberation?
4. What is the value of your arts education in the current climate?
5. How does your art overcome such problems as illiteracy?
6. Does your art enhance not just academic skill but personality, independence of mind and autonomy of spirit?
7. What are the ways in which school can form part of and contribute to the cultural and artistic life, institutions and activities of the rural community?
8. How does your art engender cross-fertilisation between major forms?
9. What are the ways in which community arts can contribute to lifelong learning eg. purpose, life, meaning, identity?
10. Discuss the democratisation of society and social inclusiveness in relation to the notion of lifelong learning.

## FOCUS GROUP INTERVIEWS

The reason I've called this discussion this afternoon is mainly because I'm doing a thesis in theatre through ECU and also because I'm really interested in the arts - the two go together. My main interest is the performing arts so in the end my thesis will come out with the emphasis on that although because there's so few performing artists in ... and - so then I've sort of opened it out to other artists.

So the format for this afternoon is that I'll be speaking now for a minute or so and hopefully I won't have to talk too much from now on for the next hour because I'd like you to respond to the questions and - what I'm doing is phenomenological research - there are different kinds of research. I know it's taken me a long time to learn how to say that word, and this type of experience is based on your lived experience so if you'd like, you can talk about how you felt when such and such happened or how you feel about that. It's more from 'that' part of you - from your experiences or from things that have happened and if you could use little anecdotes or little incidences that have happened that would be great and just be aware that we are taping this so it would be great if you could speak one at a time. I'm sure you guys can do that with the microphone and also everyone in this room, I would like everyone - even if you think that what you have got to say is not important - it is actually very important so if you could actually say and not worry too much about whether it's relevant or not, because I know it will be. So, to start off with, if we could just go around the circle and introduce ourselves and maybe a little bit about what we do, and what field we're in and so on, so I'll pass it on to .....

R Hello, my name is ..... and I'm here to support Divvy because she's a really good friend and also I trained as a classical ballet dancer and I have danced professionally in South Africa and London and in Swaziland and dance and movement has always been my love. I have just started experimenting with theatre and at this point in my life theatre - and expressing myself through this form of my creativity - has opened up so many doors so I find performance is one of the most exciting tools. I have done years at looking at myself in groups etc. but with performance you don't have to work it out, where it came from, why, or anything ... it just a new door, so I am also into bodypainting and I'm very interested in getting involved and being part of something here in ... without feeling I have to go up to Fremantle.

R My name is ..... I'm a visual artist and I'm not at all clear about what's going on ... but I might have a few comments ... being a visual artist ... it's really working ... culture emanates from ... and it's really difficult to do much about it so....

R Thanks .... I feel that ... emanates from people wherever they are and certain paradigms exist in the city and other paradigms exist in the country but for me one reason I like to live in the country is the sense of community and the sense of helping each other learn, expand and grow over a life time and that we all invest in each other. I'm involved in the performing arts and sometimes sculpture, sometimes community arts, sometimes administration. That'll do. I'll pass you on to ....

R I'm .... and I am a storyteller essentially - which takes in the more traditional forms of telling stories to the people as well as working extensively in youth theatre helping children facilitate in their stories and then putting them on, working in the theatre arts first and foremost and also visual arts as theatre takes in many of the art forms. I love working with older people and I'm starting to do a lot more of that and ultimately I'd like to see a cross-generational mix of children, adults, ... a ... big range of adults for



want of a better word - older senior citizens. ... so I think that arts is probably .... and children really are the most important element for me to place my focus on because I believe in culture being an ongoing thing and that the children are the future - for want of a better cliché - and so if you can work with children when you're young ... focus enough to ... the story through to where they're capable of working in theatre and producing plays with stories and all sorts of levels of different activities then you are giving them the opportunity to have those particular skills and giving them the experience of sharing their ideas and saying yes to each others' ideas as they grow into adulthood and that - it's like learning a foreign language - the child comes across a foreign language when they're young and they will ultimately have a lot more ease with that language because they're not diverted from one thing to another, and I feel that the arts is a language in itself and so it's really important that the arts ... and at a young age and then it becomes part of their vocabulary rather than something ... I have an anecdote of a child at the Montessori School. He ... and he informed me last year - that when we were about to do drama - we were working on a play and he said; No, he wasn't going to do drama because it was just something extra - he wanted to work on real work which was maths and science and these things and he didn't want to do drama today because it wasn't real work and I sat down and talked to him about the people he looks up to in his life and obviously the television and the actors that he'd seen and when he stopped and thought about it he realized that the play they were working with was about friendship and how important friendship was to his life and once we'd stopped and talked about it he realized that drama was perhaps even more a part of his life than in his real life - than the things he was seeing as being real learning - as maths and geography - so it was a wonderful opportunity to be able to get a child to come to terms with that. So there's an anecdote for you. Anyway, thanks.

R My name is ... . I'm a potter and a sculptor in clay. I don't really know what this is all about but I guess I'm going to find out. I'm supposed to get personal am I? Deep

and personal? I think my work speaks for itself. My work is deep and personal and I don't think it needs any particular justification except to say that I think I kind of have a responsibility as an artist. First and foremost my responsibility is to earn a living as much as I can for me and my family and after that comes the idea of trying to communicate to other people the things that I value in life and life is not the life out here but the life in here, so to me, art is a kind of process of transmission, of education and just an overflowing of being into form so that it communicates to other people in a way that edifies the spirit so to speak.

R I am ... from the ... Arts Council and I am probably the only person here that doesn't paint, pot, sculpt, sing, dance, play a musical instrument, act or own a winery! If you don't do any of the other things, you own a winery! I come from a very remote part of Western Australia where the only visual art I ever saw were the wildflowers in spring. The only performing art I ever saw was the circus once a year in the pouring rain and I greatly admire everyone else's talent. When I came to live here eleven and a half years ago there was a vibrant performing arts scene. It rapidly disappeared and the only thing I really missed living down here was the exposure to quality performing arts and that's why I got involved with the Arts Council and that's why I am the tour manager and I bring you at least twelve performing arts shows a year and I think I get the most pleasure out of the children's shows. They're great.

R My name is ... and I am a dramatic artist. That sort of umm - I perform. I create and at the moment I am writing. I can't spell but that doesn't matter because not many people read my works. I read it and then I perform it which is a really safe way of expressing because it doesn't get tampered with. I read this word process and I must say that that is what I - my belief at the moment is very much that everything is a process. Nothing just happens. It is part of a process that leads to another part and I think for me, I am aware - or learning - that it is really in the process that things happen. The

performance or the final product is a one-off but it is the process where there is most learning or most - what's the word - which is the important part of the works. I'm also a dance teacher - which I teach - totally free dancing which is basically using your body as an instrument. I encourage everybody to let go but with a quality of respect. Yeah - and at the moment - as ... was saying - things coming from the heart, I really believe that it is important to be honest with your art. The more honest, the more truthful you are, I think the more effect it has and whether you are after an effect or not doesn't matter but it's also an acknowledgement of yourself, where you are. Yes, so at the moment I'm pumping out a bit of work which is great and that's a part of my process at the moment whereas it may go into a wave of grief or stagnation or whatever, but I am in the process so my art or my works tend to work in that way too. And good on you for getting this together.

R My name is ... and I teach art over at the primary school. I really enjoy watching the children create - so to speak - I'm limited to the visual arts only - but with lots of scope there with painting and ceramic work and textiles. I have a great room which the children come to and it's really well set up so I'm really lucky there and hopefully I provide the children with a starting point which they can then go off and explore later but I reinforce ... point on honesty too, it's really important that they're honest with their peers and we sort of try and introduce different aspects of looking at different art forms. Hopefully they have a good time because that's what it's all about. Initially I think they should enjoy what they're doing and then as they grow with that and explore their own creativity, sort of move on perhaps and not feel like they're forced to do it. That's basically what I think.

I So we'll start with question number one which is actually on the sheet and question number one is: What is your notion of the lifelong learning process? Yes, just your notion, your experience of the lifelong learning process. It doesn't mean that

everybody has to answer this. Maybe three or four people or whoever wants to say anything about that particular concept.

R I've noticed the clearer I get and the more I clean out, the better my work is, so it has to do with me. I also can be a bit more appreciative and then again the idea that it'll be okay. I think I've said enough. That's it.

R I think it's pretty arrogant to think that we tiny wee little human beings can ever learn all there is about the entire universe in one wee little lifetime so I just think it's arrogant to think that you can stop learning at any point in your life. Well, it's a pretty big ask, this question. I think - what it brings to mind for me is my own learning process which saw me go through some pretty big stuff as a teenager and losing my parents and then having to process that and come out the other side and still able to live my life. And that process I think has contributed hugely to where I am and who I am now and I have no regrets, but I work a lot with teenagers, and I see the lessons, that the stuff, I should say, that comes up for them - the process that they go through either on their own or in a supportive environment with adults, can determine so much about who they end up being - well, not so much who they end up being but how they end up coping with who they are.

I know personally that I had a huge amount of support when the various processes of my younger life were going along and that that support gave me the capacity to be able to reflect a lot as I went and not to store things up which then somehow needed to be got out and processed along the way. So I had a lot of support to be able to process as I went and so I suppose my life these days is very involved with processing mine and other people - especially children's - just life experiences, daily life experiences - and I really do try to work with kids what's relevant to them, whether it be their friendships or bigger, heavier stuff, or if it's about going off to camp or there's many and varied amounts of stuff - their imagination - you know - where their imagination leads them

getting into trouble - all these big and little things that I suppose I've found my way by now. Helping to support other people in processing their stuff as they go rather than holding onto it and being left with a whole lot bigger stuff to deal with because of the nature of the fact that it hasn't come out along the way. So I suppose I feel very lucky that I had the support when I needed it and I learned how to process along the way. It's a big question though.

R I find the use of process to be a little bit of a cliché and I find it just pops up everywhere now and I think that it's - and I'm speaking probably from the point of view of a visual artist - but I find that there is a big difference between the process of visual arts and the processes that we have around us that form our society and our lives and the constructive mass of what goes on and I think for my own point of view, if you are involved in the arts and are exploring those issues and doing those things you are probably getting somewhere and I find the big problem in terms of process is that there is such a big disparity between what people do in the arts of any kind and what's happening in the mainstream of Australian life and I find it's continually a source of frustration to me and to talk about all these nice things and where we're going as humans is all fine, but when we live in a world which is very stereotypical and ugly and visually very unattractive, then that process seems to be the dominant one and that's how I relate to that.

R When you say that it's stereotypical and unattractive - I mean to me, part of the reason I don't live in the city is because I need - I find I need to have the natural around me because of the nature, because of the fact of where I find beauty first is in the natural world. So when you say that the world we live in is stereotypical and ugly I question, what are you talking about? What do you mean by that?

R Well, you know you're talking about the natural world, well I don't think that we're not part of the natural world. I think that humans have the capacity to create great beauty and to interact with nature and create great harmony and all those things. I think that we've got a problem and that the solution to that problem is people to be more artful and for people who are professionally determining arts processes to become involved in mainstream processes and so I don't believe that what we create as a whole, our wider making, need be ugly or a problem and that we need to go away to the natural areas to get our spiritual harmony. I think that the problem is that we have arts - arts has become very specialised and it's become an entertainment industry and it's separate from what's going and I think that it's very sad and it's typically Australian because other countries, in varying degrees, have that or don't have it and I think it's very Australian and it's a problem we've got with our psyches and I've spent a lot of my time trying to symbolize those problems - those stereotypical sort of mind sets that we have - and I don't think it's something that's going to be overcome, not in quite a while.

R ... , when you use the word 'mainstream process', I just wanted to ask a question. When you used the word 'mainstream process', what do you mean by that?

R I'll give you a good example. I'll give you an example that's relevant to us right now. I've just been trying to figure out what's going on with the - something that's really important to me and it might seem odd - but it's just the main street. What we've got in the main street and what's happening, in terms of , for example, we've got a Coles supermarket that's about to enter town. They want nothing to do with our identity as a place, they just want to come in here and make a huge place and we have a process of controlling those sorts of developmental impacts on our life here and that's all controlled by the Council. Yet when you talk to them all they can say do is say : well, really, we don't know, and Gee, if you want to have a point of view you'll have to go through the committee we've set up called the Streetscape Committee which has 18 people on it, not

one of whom is a visual artist. It's just dithering and more dithering, it's just hopeless. I think that these processes which go on and on with well-meaning people who man these huge committees and what have you - these processes really need to be looked at. I believe that there's a part to play for people who can contribute an aesthetic sensibility to these things especially if they've had some professional tuning in that regard and I think that these processes that we have, that actually have the greater power. We don't have much power as people who are sitting around in this meeting, the power is really in the effect, in the cause and the effect, and the effect is through processes which are very shallow and limited and by just coming together and having all our airy-fairy ideas discussed in a group - well, that's fine, it might be good for us, but we're all converts anyway. we have got no impact on what's happening so...

R Well, having known .... for a long time, I won't take the bait but what I would like to say is that I think - just simply on a personal basis, that working with children is a way in which we can become effective and allow them to gain personal power in their own ability to express - as I said before - their own vocabulary in the arts or whatever area - but make sure that the creative vocabulary is strong from early, early age. I think there's another point there which is really so huge to many artists, who, like ... , want to have some sort of impact on the visual landscape - the man-made visual landscape - and that is that - do you practise your art first and foremost, or do you spend your time going around and getting on committees and getting largely frustrated, which has been my experience, and sometimes getting somewhere, but it takes such a huge amount of time to make an impact in a society if you choose to go that way and that's a compromise that you have to make for your own time spent on creating artworks that you wish to do and I think it's a huge potential area to discuss and in particular I've put a lot of work into the cultural policies development in this shire a couple of years ago as did .... and it got to policy and it never got taken to Council and that is such a frustrating situation for those who were involved in that very very positive process that the Council, the Shire

Clerk turned into General Manager or whatever he is called and the job changed and the policy as such written and ready to go, never got to Council and is still sitting in a bottom drawer. So, I mean, I find that when you've been involved in a process that lengthy and seminars and meetings and the whole lot, the kit and kaboodle over many years, and the ... nothing. The thing gets written and finished and never even goes to Council, that puts you off, it really does. Why waste your time and then... I mean ...'s been pushing his barrow pretty hard for a long time and how far has he got. I mean, it's a big one.

I Well, what you've in effect done, is answer questions 2, 3 and 4 if you'd like to look at your sheet. Question 2: How do various constituencies outside the formal education system and institutions of government see themselves as contributing to the goal of lifelong learning for all - I figure that you've just answered that in a way that may be - I think it's great . And number 3: How is your art a vehicle for liberation? I think we've also sort of had a look at that, unless anybody would like to sort of answer that one? And also number 4. So, really questions 2, 3 and 4 are quite similar in some ways. What is the value of your arts education in the current climate?

R I just keep seeing arts education and the education system and art as a vehicle for liberation ... it's funny because getting into the state school system, which is a thing I've been tackling for many years, it very much depends on the people in the particular school and when you don't have an education diploma, a Dip. Ed., and yet you may have a degree in some area or whatever, you don't have automatic access and even if you do have a Dip. Ed. - and maybe you can comment on this - you basically don't have a lot of choice where you end up - so it very depends on the degree of openness of the Principal of any school that you are dealing with. I find these days that my biggest break in the local Primary School was when the Headmaster was on leave for a year and we got two weeks in the Primary School storytelling with every single class. And I mean it was



fantastic in process with the teachers learning ways to work with storytelling in classrooms and to meet the teachers and the children, get to know them and all sorts of things and now we really have given up there and at the High School. I get a lot of help from certain teachers and blocking from others and it's a matter of taking your time and being persistent and finding a way in and once you get in you can do a certain amount - I tend to find that if I can come in and use the space, it's probably the easiest way - but actually getting into the classrooms, which we have managed to do with the puppet project in the Youth Arts Festival, several years ago we actually got into the classrooms because of an art teacher who was really open to it and she pushed it, but that there's so much infrastructure and sometimes you get individuals who will block you in positions of power within the school system, that I tend to work with the non-government schools because there's so much openness to it and so many opportunities. So in an area like this where there's ..... School, the ... School, there's the Catholic school, there's the ..... Steiner School ... Those schools are incredibly open to the input of artists working in various art forms, and so it's great to be able to work in there and it means that a lot of your energy is taken up with those schools and that the State School children aren't necessarily getting that unless they choose to come to extra-curricular activities - outside school activities that you're offering - and then trying to get access to the kids to let them know about it - that is another thing but school newsletters are a fantastic way of letting people know what you're doing and they do work.

R I have to go. There's 60 artists involved in the ... week end. There's brochures there for you to look at and I really think ... speak to me because her children's art needs to be hung?

Please remember that we're .... though the Arts Council doesn't have anybody that does any of the practising things that you do, we are here as a support group and we are more than happy to help anybody at any time, so shout when you need some help.

R I was so busy lighting the fire, I don't know what question we are on. What question are we on? Can I answer Question 1?

I I'd love you to.

R The lifelong learning process. What is the lifelong learning process because I think that the group got a bit diverse and didn't specifically address that question. Well, what is the lifelong learning process? I guess it's what we're all involved in, isn't it? And the artists' job is to endeavour to help other people learn about things that maybe he can't touch necessarily, can't see, he can maybe feel or sense, and the lifelong learning process for me is my endeavour to go further and further into what you might call truth - to a revelation of what some people might call God, although that's a fairly risky term to use these days, that's my lifelong learning process I guess.

I Thanks ..... for diverting ... diversing.

So, I'd like to go onto Question 5 and this one is on another tangent. How does your art overcome problems such as illiteracy. Now it may not just be the problem of illiteracy, it may be other problems so that was just an example. So if anyone would like to comment on that, I would welcome your comments.

R .....`s waiting for .... to say something so he can disagree.

R We were talking about illiteracy - something very relevant to storytelling. Firstly, I was just going to say that I think art is about ideas and that when you talk about illiteracy the definitions tend to be reading, writing and arithmetic, or particularly reading and writing, and working with oral communication, and particularly oral storytelling, I find that I have developed this process whereby I work with a group of kids, say 30 kids, and we start off with 4 characters and a certain situation and we create a story orally as a

group and I've had teachers come up to me afterwards and saying that kids who have trouble with reading and writing have responded particularly well to that process because they have the ideas in there, the concept of storytelling and creation of the whole structured stories comes naturally to them but they're having real blocks with reading and writing. So it's something... I want to work with education students at the Uni I'm just really into finding out about that at the moment is how to teach teachers to work with oral literacy so that the children's ideas aren't blocked by the expectation of the education system in the outside world in general but they have to be able to read and write and I don't criticise that in the fact of being able to read and write gives you a huge advantage in terms of the outside world but it just means that their creative ideas - and the same I would say with visual arts as well - their creative ideas aren't lost and their sense of self, their sense of pride in themselves at being able to express themselves is not lost. And you know, a story can be told in many, many ways - it's not dependent on writing and reading.

R Yeah, I'd just like to reinforce that too as a visual arts teacher it's wonderful to have children come to the art room who aren't necessarily really good at maths and reading and science but they're able to express themselves and interpret situation and put it into colour or form of some sort and that's great. It's really good that they can achieve in their own rights there. That's great.

R I'd like to go along similar lines as .... , is that I have worked for many years with young people, youth - my trade as a youth worker - and I use various vehicles and tools and theatre is one of them and with theatre I can open up many many worlds of expression, verbal, physical, lighting, sound, actually constructing things, and I agree, I think that literacy and illiteracy is an ability to express and that's it. It doesn't have to be reading, writing and so that whatever tool. whatever vehicle is available to help a person

express themselves is valid as far as I am concerned. And if a person can learn they can utilise that tool to learn to express themselves, they're becoming literate.

R There's this concept I came upon a few years ago in trying to describe what theatre was to children in the Youth Theatre and it was this concept of pictures in air - that working in theatre you're creating pictures in air - and I think that the same applies to storytelling and also to films, is that they are essentially pictures in air and to create pictures in air liberates a lot of children who are not necessarily hands-on people but they have these wonderful creative minds and bodies to express with so you know he may not have the hand-to-eye talent or co-ordination .... necessarily interest, but a more, you know, still got just as much to offer so I've always stuck with that pictures in the air - I love it.

R With regards to that question, I think that there's something to be said for visual literacy as well, like our culture, like going on with what you guys are saying, is our culture - westernised culture - places so much emphasis on being able to read, being able to write, being able to do maths, but the other, the finer kinds of form of literacy, get lost. There's well, I'm visually literate although I'm not greatly literate in terms of reading, writing and arithmetic but that's really important to me - that's kind of like the basis of my life, you know that it is what gives meaning to my life, that kind of literacy. And if you look back down through history to Aboriginal cultures, they had a different - they couldn't read and write - but they were very literate with their environment, their whole environment spoke to them. The stones, the trees, the rivers, they were all tools that they used and they were very literate in that sense and I mean, what is literacy except a means to express, to communicate, to transmit ideas or concepts to one another. In our westernised society we tend to have very kind of cerebral concepts. We're all the time trying to just transmit information to one another and reading and writing is a great way of doing that but art transmits something else, it speaks on a

different level. Well so does reading and writing and if you go in that way, but I guess I'd like to stand up and beat the drum for visual literacy.

R I'd just like to add to that. I'd just like to say that a picture is worth a thousand words and I'd like to say that you can write a thousand pages of words but you could probably say that in one page that was poetic and that there is not a lot of poetry on the surface of our world that we live in here and not a lot of courage for creative, poetic lives and I think that there might be something in our expressing literal narratives or understandings in a poetic structure in the way that we are and I don't see a lot of that around me, in fact, I'm pretty bored with this little town that we've got here. I think it's pretty boring.

R I think, well, I can't spell, I don't read a lot, I don't write a lot, I use one finger. I know how to turn on and off a computer but my observation skills are high. Yeah, I didn't enjoy that at school or I wasn't in the mood to learn so my eye went elsewhere and my hands went elsewhere as well. What I have noticed with my own work and also with teaching adults and children is that there is no right or wrong in communicating or expressing, it's just important that they allow the process to happen. I'll use that word because it actually works for me. Yes, so I also feel at times, I have felt at times, that because I didn't, I always got a bit frightened when I had to, you know, send - what are those things called? - you know when you have to go for a job? - CV's, yeah, yes, I always got someone else to do it for me, but ... So, I was much more of a practical worker and so really, again, and it's been interesting writing, starting to write this second play, because the writing seems to come in gushes and there's the total avoidance of wanting to go to that computer and sit down and type but when it does happen and I discipline myself to do it, it seems to work okay but again it's that thing of coming from your truth and I notice the more I - I'm blabbering now - I'll shut up.

R I've been listening to everyone and there's so many things that I want to say, but for me, it's about when I express myself through my body I have a sense of fulfilment and I was thinking back to when I went to school. My lack of self-esteem which I'm just learning to reclaim in my life. I can see now was because everything is so out of balance in the school system. There's no balance, all the emphasis is on the left brain, yeah, the rational mind - and no wonder so many children I think could possibly be feeling an incredible lack of 'who am I' and how do I fit into this crazy world, is because in the system the way it is, the values are placed on what they can store in their memory banks and it's really quite pathetic. No wonder they don't feel they belong or they've got nothing to give because the double messages you get in the world by people - my parents, my peer group, the society I grew up in - people saying things out of their mouths and yet what I picked up intuitively and psychically, was much more powerful, much more powerful, so I think the arts has been totally overlooked. It really needs to come back into balance.

R I'd like to add something to that - I agree with what .... is saying but I think that in a way it's a bit of a scapegoat and I think that children are, by their natures, very right-brained and that they have a lot of catching up to do before they can come to equivalent terms with us in terms of what they understand as the logical operations of the world. I think that as adults we have actually had a harder case in that we have to - we really have to re-discover something and we don't have people teaching us professionally every day, the things that we need to learn. I think for us, we learn a lot through those years when we are at school and I think that the schools are generally quite well funded and quite well done - I think that the people who are doing it all are professionals and they do a pretty good job, I think the problem comes when we go out into the world and we level off. We stop learning and we assume attitudes of knowing and I think that people who live in small country towns like this one, I think that that is the big problem, that we um, and we tend to always say ; who, gee, there's a problem with me and I think

we can help the kids out, but I think we need to help ourselves out or probably we need to contribute what it is that we perceive is missing.

R Just a small point - there may be only 6,000 people in the Shire and in the city you might get 6 million - the percentage of ignoramuses, the same as here, there`s just more of them. There`s an overwhelming...

R Here`s a little cliché. I think there`s gold in everybody. So, and I think `ignoramus` is actually a pretty nasty old word you`ve got there. Everybody knows their own reality and I do think there`s gold in everyone and I think that artists are the alchemists and whether or not you come in touch with them at what point in your life and whether you have the vocabulary or the learning to understand what those images can tell you - as you say a picture tells a thousand words - leaves you in different positions as an adult. And I think that - as I said before - your childhood and the environment in which you grow up and the influences under which you are placed, or place yourself, have enormous ramifications for whether or not who you become. And just going back to the thing of literacy. I notice that there`s - no, two things missing - there`s no poets here ... invited or haven`t made it ... or musicians. When I say, who call themselves - I was just going to say - I write poetry. I also write. I write a huge amount. I love writing. I am passionate about - I`m saying people who ... - calm down - my point is, I just wanted to - it seems a little imbalanced when you talk about literacy because I realised I`m very involved with oral literacy but I`m also very involved with written literacy and writing is actually how I got into theatre and as a playwright and I teach journalism which is another art form when done well, which can be manipulated and abused very easily. So I`m very interested in teaching people to be responsible as journalists because the language of journalism has a huge impact on our world today and it can be done artfully but again it comes down to the education system. Generally lacking - concepts of journalists and the writing of journalism are just being introduce

into primary and high schools in the last 10 years I'd say. And then at university, it's now becoming an institutional learning area, so I think that - and I don't think you can deny the power that journalism has in its written form - but also obviously there's broadcasts and radio, visual journalism and I think it needs to be encompassed in some ways by artists who run away from it and I think if artists utilised it more, that they could realise they could have a hell of a lot more power if they can come to terms with using those mediums and most artists run a mile from them but there's this huge capacity there if they learn to come to terms with how to get themselves published or broadcast and I think that's an area that should be worked on, is educating artists on how to use the media - it's huge - and I think that children today are learning that and largely because of computers and visual technology which children, as I said before, they are getting the vocabulary as young children so they are not afraid of it. Whereas adults, us here, we've all had to learn it all - haven't learned it as adults so we've got a lot more fear associated with it, so I think that we will see change in terms of the Internet and all those visual technologies. And children today have so much more capacity to be heard because of the fact that they don't have that fear. So if you can help them to learn the vocabulary, they can then put it out to the whole world through the Internet and the media and not be afraid to do that.

That wasn't exactly what I started to talk about but it just all came up. The other thing I wanted to say was the language of music and the language - the written language of poetry and prose - is a wonderful area for children and adults and everybody to be able to utilise and the rhythm of language - the beauty of language - is something which I am totally enamoured with and I wouldn't ever want to be part of a discussion that was not acknowledging that written literacy is wonderful for those who have the capacity to take it on board and the opportunity to learn it - like I say - I am passionate about it. Even whether it's writing letters or writing books, you know, it's as simple as that if you are a



writer by nature. Then the school system can give you that but it's that those who are visually literate should be given the same opportunities, I think.

I Thanks, .... I think you've actually covered Question 6 which I will read for you in case anybody wants to add anything to that: Does your art enhance not just academic skill but personality, independence of mind and autonomy of spirit. So, if anyone wants to add anything to that they are welcome. Otherwise we'll be going off on another tangent although Question 7 we've sort of had a look at too ; What are the ways in which schools can form part of and contribute to our cultural and artistic life?

So, we could carry on to Question 8 unless anyone's got anything, yeah: How does your art engender cross-fertilisation between major forms? Major forms in the whole world, different subjects - science, economics.

R Well it doesn't. I mean just - ah look - I mean let's just not stuff around. I mean it doesn't - there's no influence of anything here. It's just crap. It's just, look. There's no power in the arts outside of metropolitan areas. In fact, if you're in the metropolitan area, there's really no power there either, certainly not in Western Australia. I mean it's really - and I don't know what the solutions are, I'm not offering solutions. I guess I'm just offering artistic frustration but I'm sorry this is all just airy-fairy crap. I mean if you really want to have an impact, which is what I think you do - if you just concentrate on your own little life on top of a mountain, you have this spiritual practice and you are sort of getting somewhere and you want to have that to help the rest of the world - it's not going to happen through the arts. Maybe in small ways it does but really, when you stand back and look at the actual effect of what you might be doing - it's very small. You help out the people who are already converted.

R Well, I think that small is good. I like small and that's why I felt that having lived and grown up in Sydney and coming over here, I felt that I actually did have more of an opportunity to help people to have themselves heard and to be heard by living in a smaller place rather than a larger one. And I have absolutely no regrets about that and I find myself now in a situation where I am travelling a lot around the various - well, up to an hour away for work with people who want to be heard and that being up to Bunbury or Busselton, or down to Augusta or out to Nannup or wherever ... out to Dunsborough, Yallingup - that there's a lot of people out there who want to be heard and when you work in the communications industry or communications areas, that once people realise that there are ways that they can be heard, that they really - you are in danger of being overwhelmed - so I'm very interested in training other people as well and getting other artists who are prepared to travel around and facilitate that process of helping people to be - to find ways - to be heard - so, and I think in the country it's a lot easier to access people really. I've worked in both and I chose the country so I don't think there's anything better, or bigger or anything about metropolitan areas than there are about any small country towns.

R The question was engendering cross-fertilisation between major forms ... I was just going to say that theatre - not only does it bring in the artistic medium and many of them you know : performance, acting, music, art, movement, dance etc. So there's the cross-fertilisation between mediums - films, all sorts of things, but then deals with issues obviously, so there's the capacity to then use any of those mediums to deal with any number of things, so I find - I suppose that's why I've been drawn to theatre because I love to mix and match all sorts of things and I also love working with people so, and everyone's different, so if you've got a medium where everyone can work together and their differences are honoured, then that's great. it can be very frustrating at times trying to have that engendered but I think there's a lot of capacity there.

R      Anybody's allowed to take umbrage with this, but I arguably have a quite peculiar art form which is actually helping to establish social contexts that allow people, individuals, organisations and different groups to carry on with what they want to do. For instance: the Resource Centre, the Organic Gardens, the Alternative Technology Centre, the theatre group, various other things and setting them up in a legal way and a social way and it's taken me many years to realise that it is a natural, valid creative activity. I'm not sure how successful it is - most of those things are still going - but it's very ethereal and very esoteric and I think generally not acknowledged as a creative activity but that in relation to Question 8, the actual establishment of these opportunities in itself allows people to create the transformations between the forms themselves.

I      Okay, I'd better give it on to somebody else ... you wanted to say something about cross-fertilisation ... establishment of social context to allow whatever people wanted to do.

R      What I was going to say was something - a word - .... used before ... was alchemy and to me that's a really important word because alchemy is the meeting of science and art, well, to me anyway and that's what I work at. My business is using science to create beauty and that's very important in modern computer technology where there's computer art. You're using technology to transmit something of beauty or something like that and there's also cross-fertilisation like - scientists already, they're having, they're starting - people you know, the quantum physicists, they're all starting to get kind of spiritual - there's kind of this meeting point so I think art has a role to play. I mean, it already uses technology - there's nothing wrong with using technology to produce art. Yes.

R      In relation to this Question 8, I have an anecdote. I have this beautiful case of cross-fertilisation between major forms the other day. I have been going to a friend of

mine for Feldenkrais which is a lovely case of cross-fertilisation between forms. It was originally developed for actors to learn to create characters through their bodies and then it got adopted by physiotherapy and then became a major force in the health area, particularly in Europe. Anyway, so I'm a great lover of Feldenkrais and I've been going to a friend of mine who is a Feldenkrais physio and we meet down at the ... Chapel. Anyway, we got talking about bartering and bartering her time for glass, you know - something we do a bit - and bartering is another thing with the arts but I won't go into that. Anyway, she caught me in a restaurant down in ... the other day and she said, Look, I've been thinking about this concept of bartering and your theatre skills and I said, Oh yeah, great, what? And she said, we've got a bit of politics happening down here at ... at the moment - there's all sorts of issues and she named a few of them - you know, like the local developer looking like not honouring a lot of his community development agreement for ... and also the bypass road that is carrying a huge amount of traffic and the lack of safety and the two kids nearly being run over and the water issues that are going on down there and the cost of getting it connected to mainstream water etc, etc, etc. So that was just a couple of them and she said what the idea had struck her that I might be interested in - one thing the ... action group have - keep coming up against - is that they keep going to Council meetings to put up their cases but they find that they are not getting anywhere and they're standing up with these pieces of paper and pleading and talking and and giving the good fight and bringing the reasoning behind it but they're not being heard. So they started talking about okay, well, what's a way that we can do something different to surprise the councillors into finally hearing this and they thought about theatre because that way they can present political issues, say things that they couldn't say in an ordinary presentation to Council, they can say a lot more in theatre and they could press the boundaries a lot further and would I - and that they'd spoken to the Youth Council - various Youth Councils (this is private, isn't it?) - yes? - who were interested - *very* interested - in doing some theatre that could then be taken to Council to present some of these issues through the Youth Council using theatre so there's ... and I

said You bet!, I'd love to and the lovely thing about it is that she's offering me to do a barter for Feldenkrais, for me to work with the kids so between two individuals we may be able to then get some through the Council in a way that many adults and kids have tried over a long period of time, and it's not getting anywhere, so the potential is huge.

I ...So you can comment on Question 9 if you would like or we can go on to Question 10.

R Umm, cross-fertilisation - fucking around! I don't know if this goes with ante-joke? I'm not quite sure what ante-joke means? Anecdote!!!

Well, here's a little story for you. Okay, I'm into humour at the moment so I see an opportunity there working with teenagers that they're building this Youth Cafe which has been a bit of a process - ugly building - I hope you hang around ... and maybe do something there. I hope you get through that ... there's these frustrating moments - that's part of that art. It's like a challenge mate. Go through it. Don't run away!

Yes, yes, anyway, I hope you can use that energy into creating something positive. So what I would like to do - and you know this is on tape - because I don't want to be held to it, but I'd like to start off. It's hard actually, dealing with teenagers because in some ways what you want to, if you want to control them in any way, they'll run for a mile so it's actually - they are smart - that's right. Umm, so what I'd like to do through theatre - and I've done eight years of community work and I got a bit burnt out - and that's something that does happen in the country, but I was smart enough to know Okay, it's time for me to do what I need to do for me, but now thinking about the youth - and also something else I'd like to do is have a comedy night. A stand-up comedy night at the ugly Youth Cafe and hopefully, if it's good and I believe in quality, and it's hard with humour because it's such a touch and go area to work in, that you know that's something that I really enjoy and I know when I enjoy something I'll ... it'll usually work out the way it's meant to be and I trust in that process too, but, and I know that I'll get

something out of it. It's not primarily the do-gooder in town. Do-gooders, heh, done that. Actually I didn't know what I was doing when I did that. But, what else shall I say. Just to wind up, yeah. I work quite a lot on my own so I did work with the community but I found that - and that had its good and bad points - but now I ... and a bit like .... - saying - I do get culturally frustrated down here but luckily enough I can go and get an injection in Perth and occasionally get to Sydney or take a trip somewhere.

So I'm grateful that I've actually got some finance behind me and also my business is doing okay. It's not making lots of money but it is working and I find that not so much the better my art gets but the clearer I get, the better my teaching is and also I suppose that reflects in performance or whatever else I'm doing and I do have an effect when I notice the amount of people that actually come to work with me and that's something that I have no control over but I actually feel very full about what I'm doing. I enjoy it. I am happy today. Yeah, but I do agree I either get frustrated as well, but I can do something about that. I don't have to go ..... I can, yes, I can and I do and that's it ,  
Amen!

### *Music drowning out I*

R I just want to say something about community arts. Question ..... *lifelong question she repeats here* I think that some - what I perceive - to what ....'s been saying - as in parallel to that but on a community arts perspective, is that you're working with process rather than product a lot more in community arts rather than the individual artist as such and .... I know you've done both, yeah, well, I don't, and I think community arts, in terms of people gaining access to the arts or the capacity to do something that they've never seen themselves doing before, in whatever degree. Even if it can move them sideways by one centimetre. Not some huge leap in our understanding to turn them from one type of person into another type of person - somebody who is going to go on Council and change the world - or, you know, if it can just ... participation in some sort

of community arts can shift a perspective even like I say, one centimetre sideways...

*(Aside)* Well, that's bullshit for you, but it's not for a lot of other people.

*Other R is responding in background, unable to be heard to decipher.*

R      Again ... Well, no I don't agree. I think there's levels of courageous and your life experience, more often than not, helps determine what degree is big courageous and what degree is little courageous and one centimetre for someone who has had a life experience that has given them a lot of fear is a big courageous. So as far as I am concerned, as a community artist, I think that the value in community arts is accessing and reaching people who have not had access previously and are - can be - if they're open to it - move even one centimetre.

I      So, ...., can I ask you a question? To push people past that one percent (timidity?) to get them up to say 90% courage, do you reckon it depends on the artist or what would it depend on, would you say?

R      That's your job. That's your role. Let's not pussy-foot. Look - if you want to be an artist, it's a pretty hard bloody slog and if you don't want to be an artist, fine. Do your job. Do what you normally do which is what everybody else does in society. But if you want to be an artist, then go for it - do something, be courageous and show some bloody courage otherwise don't bother because there's enough mediocre crap around so one percent courage theory is ..... sorry, I'm sick of it. I'm sick of it, I really am.

R      I think that being an artist and being involved in the arts are different things. If you are a plumber, or if you are a school kid that has lost its' parents or been abused or whatever, then you've got not necessarily an interest in being an artist but your involvement in the arts can help you to move just zero, any degree - whatever your

perspective, so that being an artist is actually quite a different thing to being involved in the arts and I think that community arts - what it does - is it gives access to anybody who is prepared to step slightly sideways, change their perspective or just have fun and just being involved in a theatre production - who has never done anything like that before .... and I have just adjudicated the talent quest at the ... Primary yesterday. Seeing these kids aged from grade two up to grade seven and many, like two-thirds of them, had never been in a talent quest before. Seeing, you know, a little seven year old girl get up and sing on her own, this beautiful song ... You know... Who knows... one day she may get up on the stage and sing to the world. The fact that she had the courage to get up on stage and sing a song to all the kids in her school, and I mean there were many kids. She was just one example, and she just put on a tee shirt with a sunflower on it .. she`d thought about it enough, she was singing a song about `Here comes the sun` you know, and she`d thought about it enough to put on a tee shirt and that pretty colourful, bright, sunny headband. I mean she`d thought about it at home, practised it, and she had the courage to get up on stage and I mean, she may turn out to be a plumber but she was involved in the arts and she`s not trying to be `an` artist and I think when you express your anger like that about, you know, `Artists have to be this, or artists have to be that` then you`re actually missing the point because I`m not talking about people who want to be involved in the arts, not necessarily make their lifetime as an artist thing ... well, she may be but.....

R I think one of the issues of this society is .... being expressed by .... is that we have such a category as a capital A Artist. There`s a lot of societies where everybody is creative ... the whole culture ... there`s a bit of everybody ... and I think that`s problematic in our society that we have to have a category called `Artist.` Yes, exactly, it`s wrong, it`s completely wrong, it shouldn`t be happening. the only thing I would say about community arts that may - and one reason that I have been involved in community arts, is that with a little bit of hope - in these - what I`m suggesting is that by trying to



educate people about their own creativity and their ability to to express their creativity, is that they`re going to be more open to capital A Artists, to survive and exist and that they have more value because they`re actually recognising it in themselves and they see it as value but in terms of having a category called Artist, I think it stinks.

R All right. I agree with what you`re saying .... but people - can I make this distinction between - I mean - what is coming out of my mouth - I know you guys don`t want to hear this frustration stuff - bit I`m about to head over east for a a quick tour of what`s going on over there, so I`ve got this welling up in me but - and I`m doing a lot of positive things at the moment I have to tell you, I`m doing a lot of things at the moment. But, look, what I`ve got to say is that there is a point that you step over when you head in the direction with a big sign that says `passion`, and when you head in that direction - if you`re talking about art, you`re talking about passion, you`re talking about emotions, you`re talking about the human spirit, or the higher qualities - if you`re just - if you want to step over into that non-sensical, non-logical area and be there, then bloody well be there and don`t just say, Well, gee, I don`t know about you with the capital A, but I am going to be there one percent ... Just BE THERE, because I tell you what ... it`s a better world...

*Reply in background*

I`m not disagreeing, I`m not saying that you can`t just have one element of art in your life and that`s not a good thing for you, what I`m saying is stop being so fucking Australian, just, please, just, I mean, please just let`s loosen up here and give some credibilty to the idea of being passionately into this whole idea and see what sort of vista opens up to you and what sort of change and capacity that could have. Let`s not be so logical, so fucking German all the time, ah, gee, it means this... It means that in terms of quarts and ounces, let`s just sort of take a break from all that crap and just say, Look, we live in a stereotypical place, we live as much as Germans do, Germanlike and maybe if we just say, Hey, some artists are taking a big gamble and they`re just pushing that to the

limit. Let's see them as having some potential of leadership quality or let's see that within ourselves and let's lead it in another direction. Let's not just sit back on our arses and try and follow behind the direction that society is taking us. I don't mean to be passionate when I come to these sort of things. I am an intellectual as well as I am passionate.

R I think you misunderstand, I think we're all passionate about our own forms, it's just that we may not necessarily bring that passion to a discussion.

R Well look, I've been here for a while and I've contributed fucking lots to this community here and I came here with the expectation that .... was a place that had artists and that there was a potential here for it to be a little autonomous artful community and that we could get things done. Well, I've found out is that, well, much, it's through my naivety of course - it's like everywhere else. No, it's more fucking, this is a tradesmans' paradise, not an artists' paradise.

R Well, where are you going to go where it's best?

R Well, I'm thinking of giving up on the dream. I'm thinking of going to Melbourne and living somewhere on the outskirts of Melbourne and doing my thing there. I just can't do it anymore. I really can't. I mean, I can exhibit what I do anywhere. I can go anywhere and I can do it and get some sort of credibility. I really can. Honestly. To tell you the truth. And, but what I really wanted was to be here and to have this society become something, autonomous, different, because I really don't like Australian culture.

R .... , I don't think you're any different to any of us in this room. You've got a dream.

R I had a dream, I've given up on the dream. I've sold out and I just want to pursue my professional specialised career now.

R Well, that's a dream in itself too and if something comes in the way of that, if something becomes a barrier to that, then you'll have to get over that hurdle too.

R Not being negative. I am trying to add realism here. Theatre here does not exist. For example, we have got a good theatre here but nothing is going on. Had something six years ago ... could have been something.

R I think you are being crowded out by negativity. There are a lot of people doing a lot of things.

R I just want quality, people who have more quality will do it.

R We are dealing with different levels of ignorance.

R There is the capacity to have a high level of quality here.

R ... putting her down a lot ... It is getting boring so I have to leave

## **CHAPTER 6**

### **RESULTS**

#### **Introduction**

The phenomenon of the arts in a country and how it is influenced by individuals and how these individuals - and others - are affected by the arts is rich, colourful and diverse, involving many different aspects and variables. The informants in this study have been closely associated with this phenomenon for many years and the information given by them was of a wide and varied content. The phenomena experienced by these informants were truly 'lived' experiences and many unexpected and often contentious topics surfaced in the course of the interviews.

#### **The Reflective Practitioner**

'The five qualities of the Reflective Practitioner emphasised in the School of Education at Coastal Carolina University are:

- The ability to apply knowledge of learners and learning;
- The ability to apply skills in research and scholarship;
- The ability to work with diverse populations;
- The ability to integrate technology in all facets of teaching ; and
- The ability to demonstrate high ethical standards.'

(Education Academic Homepage. CCU Homepage.)

As a reflective drama practitioner, the researcher felt that the 'voices' of these

respondents were most important with a reflective interview technique organically evolving as the interviews progressed. The researcher's attempt to remain neutral, especially on an inner level, didn't occur effortlessly and the concept of sensitivity had to be kept as a conscious careful awareness for the researcher. This will be expanded upon later in the discussion chapter. It is relevant that the researcher is attempting to undertake political, social and economic-based research using phenomenology and hermeneutics.

### **The Focus**

The study was concerned with exploring the lived experiences of a wide variety of rural arts workers and was based on the assumptions and pre-conceptions that geographical and cultural isolation contributes to significant problems (and acknowledges the necessity of isolation for others). The specific focus of the investigation was to examine the political, social, economic and artistic positions of these workers when organising, co-ordinating and funding arts activities and projects. This study's primary focus was to identify key experiences and patterns of understanding and to interpret the 'shared' meanings of the experiences of the participants. The researcher anticipated focussing on the 'essence' of the phenomenon for these workers. The secondary concern of this study was to examine how these experiences foreshadowed an appreciation for lifelong learning.

### **Five Key Themes**

An overview of the data showed the emergence of five key themes relating to the experiences of the participants:

- Local Development
- Communication
- Demand and Supply

- Management, Co-ordination and Finance
- Boredom, Powerlessness and Artistic Frustration

## 1. LOCAL DEVELOPMENT

Several of the participants expressed concern over the lack of support from the community and the local Council. In fact, this was a strong emotional delivery given regarding the Cultural Development Policy which had been formulated some time ago (by the Shire council staff) and never taken any further. To quote one participant: "It's a huge potential area to discuss and in particular I've put a lot of work into the Cultural Policies Development in this Shire a couple of years ago and it got to policy. It got written as a policy and it never got taken to Council and that is such a frustrating situation for those who are involved in that very very positive process ... is still sitting in a bottom drawer."

The matter of aesthetic sensibilities was also raised and this was specifically in regard to the main street. To quote another participant: "We've got a Coles supermarket that's about to enter town. They want nothing to do with our identity as a place, they just want to come in here and make a huge place."

The arts workers in this study are not unique in their passion for their art and the repercussions it can have on the wider community. The researcher felt that not all of the participants had experienced the same situations in regard to their dealings with the local community and Council. One participant persisted in her attempts to gain access into the school system and she said: "I've been tackling the school system for many years and it very much depends on the people in a particular school and when you don't have an Education Diploma, a Dip. Ed. ... and yet you may have a degree in some area or whatever ... you don't have automatic access and even if you do have a Dip. Ed. - and

maybe you can comment on this - you basically don't have a lot of choice where you end up - so it very much depends on the degree of openness of the Principal of any school that you are dealing with." She went on to comment on individuals who are in positions of leadership having power and this, the researcher felt, was the 'essence' of several of the participants negative experiences with the local development and the local community.

### **1a. Local Development and Lifelong Learning**

Several of the participants in the study agreed that there is a need for co-ordinated action in regard to lobbying the local schools and the council for better venues, new buildings solely for cultural activities, more flexibility within existing venues and having more sympathetic persons in positions of power within the community. The "degree of openness" discussed by the participant in the paragraph above relates to this idea of sympathetic persons in power and to the notion of lifelong learning. There is a need for arts workers to be able to express to people in power their creative ideas, aspirations and interests regarding the aesthetics of local development. Aesthetic experience or 'aesthetic sensibility' as one participant put it is an important aspect of lifelong learning. this participant went on to say 'there's a part to play for people who can contribute an aesthetic sensibility to these things especially if they've had some professional tuning in that regard and I think that these processes that we have , actually have the greater power.'

### **2. Communication**

A major thread running through all the participants comments was the theme of communication. As one participant said: "We're all the time trying to just transmit information to one another and reading and writing is a great way of doing that but art

transmits something else. It speaks on a different level. I guess I'd like to stand up and beat the drum for visual literacy.”

The idea of people being 'heard' was discussed at length during the interviews. Some people felt it was easier being 'heard' in a small country town than in a city and others felt it was a problem. The booklet "Miles Ahead" (Arts Marketing for Regional Australia) has a section on communication studies and talks about it as a two-way street. Conservative Regional Environments were also cited in this booklet and how the arts were not included in corporate promotional materials.

Communication between these arts workers (the participants) and other arts workers, the local community, the Council and others seemingly happens sporadically by word of mouth and in quiet and formal ways. One respondent had grown up in Sydney and felt that coming over here to a small rural town gave her the opportunity to 'help people have themselves heard by living in a smaller place rather than a larger one.' She went on to explain how her work involves travelling to various locations, and that in working in the communications industry she was in danger of being overwhelmed too, due to the number of people who wanted to access that outlet. The idea of training more people and other artists also surfaced as necessary to facilitating more access to that outlet. The idea of training more people and other artists also surfaced as a necessary component to the facilitation of more access to communication techniques. One statement: 'in the country it's a lot easier to access people' could be the basis for further investigation and research as this idea is the subject of debate in both city and country areas and especially relevant to communication. Even bartering was mentioned. One participant told an engaging story relating to this concept.

The notion of communicating to and reaching people who have not had access to the arts previously was also discussed at length and the emergent theme here was the notion



of standards. Some of the participants felt that shifting of people's perspectives was appropriate even to a small degree, as long as they were participating in the arts event. Others felt that they, as artists, had a responsibility to maintain standards in art. Still others felt that some of the participants in this study were 'artists' as opposed to being involved with community arts and that this influenced their stance on standards and communication styles.

## **2a. Communication and Lifelong Learning**

The two concepts, communication and lifelong learning - emerged constantly as parallel ideas during the course of the research. For example 'children gain personal power in their ability to express' was one comment made by a respondent. Personal power is a valuable aspect in the development of lifelong learning. It is linked to a person's sense of value, integrity and dignity as is suggested by the above statement. The idea of communicating values was discussed at some length and another respondent's comment on this was 'the idea of trying to communicate to other people the things that I value in life - and life is not the life out there but the life in here'.

Life long learning depends on harmonious and productive relationships between people. Another statement suggests that 'art is a kind of process of transmission, of education and just an overflowing of being into form, so that it communicates to other people in a way that edifies the spirit so to speak.' The remarks made above are closely related to other comments made by several of the participants during the research.

It was also suggested that the establishment of an atmosphere of trust between different groups needed to underpin any aspect of lifelong learning and communication within a community. There's a wonderful story regarding this which involved a young boy discovering that 'doing' drama was just as important as maths and science. This story epitomises the integration of trust, communication and lifelong learning.

### **3. DEMAND AND SUPPLY**

The theme of demand and supply by the community and how it has been approached historically is a fascinating phenomenon and the researcher enjoyed listening to one respondent's story of how she came to conduct the local choral group way back in 1954! This is a wonderful example of demand and supply by the community. The farmers and their wives enjoyed singing the Christmas carols so much they wanted more music making and 43 years later this group, based on demand and supply, is still going loud and strong.

How supply and demand is approached by the Arts Council today is critical and this is demonstrated by the statements of two respondents. "We facilitate whatever the districts ask us to do, what they demand" and "the demand of the people. You open the door and see..." and "we agree to promote, we think something will be good then it goes down the drain." These three statements suggest that the theme of demand and supply is critical - the informants all commented very strongly on this.

The researcher's pre-conceptions revolve around the fact that further surveys are needed to find out what are the communities needs and wants. Whether this has been done is to be discovered and this may lead to an area of further investigation. One informant stated that: "We asked all the representatives (from different groups) to come, some came, some didn't." This bringing together of different groups including all facets of the community seems to be the main underlying factor of the phenomenon.

### **3a DEMAND, SUPPLY AND LIFELONG LEARNING**

Some of the participants were aware of the need for including the concept of lifelong learning into the demand and supply aspect of the community. As one respondent stated, 'The performance of the final product is a one-off but it is the process where there is most learning or most - what's the word? - which is the most important part of the works.' So even though the demand is there for performance and entertainment, the respondents would have agreed that there are elements of deeper learning involved in what they do in their arts practices. As another respondent said, 'The only thing that I really missed living down here was the exposure to quality performing arts' which suggests an element of the transformation of human nature is involved in engaging arts as a part of lifelong learning.

### **4. MANAGEMENT, CO-ORDINATION & FINANCE**

The statement "it's a totally voluntary organisation with 10 committee members", illustrates fairly well how the Arts Council functions and another statement "...puts in a lot of time and expertise." This suggests that some Arts Councils are run mainly by volunteers, possibly individuals who love the arts although their experience is created by each event they manage. Arts management courses in regional country areas would be a positive step towards the expansion of any country Arts Council. One interviewee in the study said: "You know I really admire the potters, sculptors and artists we have here but they haven't a clue about getting organised - they hate it!" This highlights the fact that regional arts management and co-ordination is a problem. Difficulties were experienced by all the study participants, whether they were involved in management or not. The statement: "I also worked with ... and we did all our own funding applications" is an aspect of management and co-ordination of critical importance to the informants. The

self funding issue and the notion that “We get lumbered with the things that aren't commercially viable for anyone else” indicates the problems participants had accessing funds for anything other than small, limited events. The story told by one informant about the “bribery and corruption” that went on between the Arts Council workers to bring the Russian String Quartet to the town highlights this fact. Even though the story is told with humour and light-heartedness, there is an underlying theme of sheer determination and will.

#### **4a. MANAGEMENT, COORDINATION, FINANCE AND LIFELONG LEARNING**

The sheer determination and will executed by the Arts Council workers mentioned above is an important aspect of lifelong learning. It is the responsibility of each individual to manage their own lives and this kind of management involves such attributes as will and determination demonstrated by this arts worker.

The idea of casting government monopolies to the side and investing in each other requires a constant re-organising and restructuring of experiences which is an important aspect of lifelong learning. One participant even said, ‘I like to live in the country - it's the sense of community and the sense of helping each other learn, expand and grow over a lifetime and we all invest in each other.’

An interesting underlying theme that surfaced during the course of the research was the fact that local artists themselves needed to foster a more developed infrastructure regarding management and and co-ordination. It was suggested that the involvement of other partners, including some investment in each other, was needed for artistic and economic growth. These are lifelong learning skills. Therefore it is the researcher's assumption that the education of the whole community, including artists and arts

workers is paramount to the development of management, co-ordination, finance and lifelong learning.

## **5. BOREDOM, POWERLESSNESS, ARTISTIC FRUSTRATION**

Boredom, powerlessness and artistic frustration were terms which emerged collectively and individually, or were linked to other more major themes, and seemed to underpin a lot of what the participants had experienced and were still experiencing. There was a sense of powerlessness especially around the Council's Cultural Policy, which hadn't yet been published, and also in connection to artists in the community having their say regarding the beautification of the town streetscape. As well as this, the lack of moral support seems to be an underlying issue in most cases. Some people felt that "getting an injection" of this (support) could only happen in conjunction with a visit to the city. The feeling of artistic frustration was also linked to a sense of value and worth which wasn't necessarily forthcoming from the wider local community.

### **5a. BOREDOM, POWERLESSNESS, ARTISTIC FRUSTRATION AND LIFELONG LEARNING**

Most of the participants had experienced a sense of apprehension because of lack of funding for regional artists and a lack of appropriate acknowledgement by government bodies such as councils, schools and some larger organisations. It was felt that more promotion was needed to enhance the visibility of local artists and performers: this linked to their sense of value and self-worth, and as one participant said, 'there is the capacity to have a high level of quality here.'

The idea of empowerment of the individual within society is a constant 'catch-cry' of the proponents of lifelong learning. For arts workers to gain recognition and visibility within a community they must embrace empowerment together as a co-ordinated cohesive force. Problems such as lack of professional practitioners for instance, contributes to artistic frustration and as one participant in the study stated, 'We stop learning and we assume attitudes of knowing and I think that people who live in small country towns like this one, I think that is the big problem.'

Personal satisfaction (as opposed to boredom) is an underlying component in lifelong learning. This study showed that the need for positive relationships between arts workers and the community themselves is paramount to personal and artistic satisfaction. The study also highlighted the fact that many rural arts workers leave their rural community because of cultural or artistic frustration.

As one participant stated 'I do get culturally frustrated down here but luckily enough I can go and get an injection in Perth and occasionally get to Sydney...'. Several of the participants mentioned leaving the community for this reason. The researcher holds that this particular issue is in need of further investigation. The time limitations of this study meant that questions such as 'What are the reasons for arts workers to travel outside of their community?' were not able to be answered during the course of this research.

## CHAPTER 7

### **Summary and Emerging Commentary of Results**

Whilst this study was concerned with the exploration of the 'lived' experiences of rural arts workers it is important to map out the frame of the 'results' of this research. The understanding of cultural events experienced by the participants will attempt to explore several main areas. Additionally a comment will be made on the secondary focus which was to investigate how these experiences foreshadowed an appreciation for the lifelong learning process. Therefore this study was conducted on a sample population of a variety of rural arts workers in a country town in Western Australia, All of the participants were classified as long term residents of the town.

Analysis of the data showed some significant points relating to the roles of these workers in the community. In engaging in this research with the informed participants I have identified several key strands of knowing unique to their perceptions. Role-balance, concerns pertaining to moral support, fears of resentment and exploitation, issues of communication and the scattered communities of practitioners all became significant concerns for the practitioners. The issues surrounding children and youth were also discussed: finally this section examines the issue of environment as it pertained to their perceptions.

#### **Role-balancing**

It was evident from much of the discussion during the interviews that these workers juggled several different arts hats, apart from the family commitments and responsibilities and that this led to problems regarding standards: mediocre and sloppy artistic works presented to a community would be of little or no value to deeper learning or lifelong learning.

Rural arts workers need time and focus to develop their creative and inspirational aspirations. It is clear that arts workers' collaborative artistic practice can occur more easily if arts workers assume fewer roles and perform those fewer roles with more ease and quality.

Art in the community can be an essential and powerful way in which people can build and rebuild their society with more people encouraged to take on various roles. The social scientists who developed the concept of 'social capital' suggest that humans achieve far more by co-operating than by competing and that experiences that develop trust and discovery of common ground allow people to improve the quality of their lives and of community. Community can derive long-lasting benefits through co-operation and balancing of roles. These benefits can be economic, bureaucratic and recreational to name but a few. This understanding may lead on to a community's refusal to accept anything but the best from local and visiting artists which can only lead on to fostering lifelong learning values in everybody.

### **Moral Support**

Rural arts workers can benefit a community in many ways, although the issue of moral support by the community, local and state governments and even other arts workers is critical. The study community is a 'tradesman's paradise not an artist's paradise' where changing attitudes is difficult. Social isolation, despondency, low self-esteem and lack of moral support all work against the likelihood of rural arts workers being recognised unless this issue is addressed within the community. More investment by local and state governments needs to be made to empower these workers and to give them the recognition they deserve. We need to nurture these people and their vitality, determination and will. The social health of the community depends upon its creative soul and artistic expression. We need to support emerging artists and nourish their ideas



and concepts. Many arts workers in rural communities work voluntarily - a situation not taken into account in some areas. `Burn-out` is a common catch-cry from volunteers.

The arts and its workers, paid or unpaid, play a vital role in building strong, cohesive and viable communities. In difficult times, large scale arts events can lift the spirit of a community more than anything else.

Schools need to be educated in such a way that they welcome the involvement of the arts workers in different activities that occur during a school year. Co-operative working relationships can be built upon and the children can be more fully encouraged to develop their artistic aspirations with the arts workers in their town. As one participant in this study said `I get a lot of help from certain teachers, and blocking from others, and it's a matter of taking your time and being persistent and finding a way in and once you get in you can do a certain amount ..... several years ago we actually got into classrooms because of an art teacher who was really open to it and she pushed it, but that there's so much infrastructure and sometimes you get individuals who will block you who are in positions of power within the school system.` So although circumstances are changing, many teachers still need educating about the means of supporting outside arts workers within the system. This is especially important in rural communities where outside artistic outlets are limited for arts workers and resident artists.

### **Resentment and Exploitation**

The `blocking` of arts workers in the school system mentioned earlier can only lead to resentment - a feeling which was an underlying factor during one of the interviews carried out for this study. This notion of resentment follows on from the lack of moral support. The notion of `burn-out` also follows on from perceived exploitation when arts workers have too many `hats to wear`. The issue of exploitation is magnified in a rural

community where per head of the population, there are usually too few arts workers performing several tasks each.

There are remedies for this, such as amalgamation of committees and organisations and the generation of regional identity, which would lead to more people becoming interested in rural arts to enhance this. The idea of community awareness raising would also be of benefit to the establishment of mutual co-operation and co-ordination. The challenge for any community is to re-evaluate and/or reinforce values which are working, and to change those which aren't working so that these feelings of resentment and exploitation are transformed and other more powerful tools are set in place.

## **Communication and Scattered Communities**

In this new century and globalised world the many aspects of communication are too varied to address in depth within the terms of this study. The researcher wishes to stay within the realms of the rural community and its workers when discussing challenges of communications. Because of new technology any community and its individuals are able to connect globally within an instant. Therefore it is no longer difficult for a rural community such as this one being discussed to ensure continued improvement in the communication sector. So why isn't it happening as it could be?

Within rural communities the majority of the population is scattered over a huge area and new methods of communication are still being implemented although these methods need to be re-evaluated. Indeed, one participant stated 'I'm very interested in training other people and getting other artists who are prepared to travel around and facilitate that process of helping people, to be - to find ways - to be heard.'

The process in arts communication is only just beginning in rural areas. For example, this study community has an arts council, and yet none of the volunteers on this council have received training in the area of arts communication. Indeed, many rural communities need to look at supplying training in community arts skills not just in the field of communication. The majority of people working in this field would welcome this and the concept of demand and supply needs to be surveyed in regard to each individual community. As one participant in the study stated, 'There's a lot of people out there who want to be heard and when you work in the communications industry or communications area, once people realise that there are ways that they can be heard and that they find out that there are facilitators to help them be heard, that they are really - you are in danger of being overwhelmed.'

Communication and the arts is a broad area, and the idea that local government is looking at employing more people as community Cultural Development Officers to deal with this and other areas can only be of benefit to any rural community. (See Training Needs Analysis table, Appendix iii and Executive Summary, Appendix iv.)

The idea of empowerment of rural arts workers through increased articulation skills is important when thinking about the scattered community and communication. Many projects organically evolve through `word-of-mouth` in this kind of situation. Giving people the opportunity to have more of a vocal identity through the media is becoming a necessary aspect of communication in remote communities and in this way the arts have as much a public function as well as an entertainment function.

### **Children and Youth**

The amount of creativity, enthusiasm and imagination in this sector of the community is immense and the fostering of the integration of this within the community is of the utmost importance. For instance as one participant stated `the arts become a part of children`s vocabulary`. Therefore, when we`re talking about communication and lifelong learning for instance, we`re talking about children, youth and the arts as a vehicle of lifelong learning for all.

It is a well documented fact that schools who devote more time to the arts in their curriculum have higher achievers academically, than those schools who don` t. For example, in the article `Education in the Arts is an Education for Life`, Perrin (1994) states that `In a post-industrial society flexibility and creativity become more valuable in the workplace.` She talks about students being `active learners`(1994) so that they become risk-takers and push themselves past their limits and that they have the courage of their convictions. The arts can develop all of these skills and more and as one

participant in this study noted 'artists help other people learn about things he can't touch necessarily, can't see, he can maybe feel or sense.'

Rural arts workers and their communities need to look at involving the expertise and processes of young people in their activities so that they can develop a love and appreciation of the arts. There needs to be active participation and engagement in art which is relevant. These communities need to look at getting back to the 'grass roots' when dealing with their youth and look at what they want rather than what they (the community leaders) think they need. This includes giving a 'real' voice to the youth in the community and not some pre-conceived notion of what we want them to become. Through the arts, youth in a community are able to explore this authentic voice in different ways and with different role models. The idea of arts mentors is worthy and this needs to be explored by the community and its arts workers. As one participant stated, 'artists are the alchemists.'

### **The Environment**

The environment that surrounds our children and youth is important and is an integral part of their growth and their lifelong learning process. A rural community's environment is very different to a city environment although some of the same issues come up if our youth needs aren't catered for. The researcher has previously mentioned the problems surrounding a 'scattered' and isolated rural community but the physical side of a rural environment also needs to be studied. As one participant stated, 'if you look back down through history to Aboriginal cultures, they had a different - they couldn't read or write - but they were very literate with their environment. Their whole environment spoke to them. The stones, the trees, the rivers, they were all tools that they used and they were very literate in that sense and I mean what is literacy except a means to express, to communicate, to transmit ideas or concepts to one another?' In many ways the arts and

arts workers have a tremendous role to play in invoking in a community its` essence or soul and the children in that community are obviously a big part of that essence and soul.

## **Conclusion**

Community arts workers live within what might be called a sceptical social climate. The manner in which the nature of art as learning is perceived would indicate that there are still many instances where arts are regarded as peripheral to the understanding of the community. The potential for new insights into the arts as learning processes is indicated above. These earlier perceptions are not objective facts - they are not the experience of a pattern of behaviour of people in general. What we have above is the lived experiences of the particular group of people at that particular time. It is of no surprise therefore that the findings are contextualised personal and individual meanings. This research is not objectifying facts and addressing de-contextualised information and is an occasion for contextualised shared social/cultural meanings that are equally important. Further research would ideally address the actions that can change the above contexts for arts workers.

**CHAPTER 8**  
**RURAL ARTS WORKERS**  
**AND EMERGENT TRENDS FOR LIFELONG LEARNING**

On considering the issue of lifelong learning the researcher was able to identify several key characteristic trends. Lifelong learning is the development of adult learning which reflects sensitivity. The arts workers were also able to consider how the arts may be further invited into their community of art-working in a way which is meaningful, significant and life-fulfilling. The data had several key themes which may be identified as belonging to any areas of `arts education` and also sit comfortably within the framework of lifelong learning. All education is culturally bound. All education will enable the educated individual to develop a sense of responsibility towards his community and himself. Lifelong learning is an integrated experience so the idea that the arts are an `alchemical process` will also be considered in the following section. In the year 2000 it would be impossible not to consider the importance of technology as an agent for the advancement in the use of arts workers life practises and in lifelong learning.

The participants in this study perceived the concept of lifelong learning in relation to their work in various ways. The researcher discovered these emergent trends to be:

1. Culture
2. Responsibility
3. Aesthetic sensibilities
4. Integration
5. Artists as alchemists
6. Technology

## **1. CULTURE:**

Culture describes how people identify and express themselves. Today's community is comprised of diverse elements. Local government initiative in co-ordinating cultural development activities will result in a better quality of life. A study expressed this by saying that 'culture is an ongoing thing and it's about saying yes to each others idea.'

In the document 'A Cultural Planning Guide for Local Government' it is stated (p. 12) that 'Local identity is a mixture of the public environment, its cultural heritage, the people who live there and how they interact with everything and everyone around them. Because this mixture is complex each community is unique.' What is unique about this community being researched is the number of artists working as solo facilitators of many different aspects of the community. In relation to this one participant stated 'I'm involved in the performing arts and sometimes sculpture, ... sometimes sculpture, sometimes community arts, sometimes administration.' This suggests that arts workers have a lot to offer regarding the inclusion of lifelong learning into a community and its culture.

## **2. RESPONSIBILITY:**

The participants talked at length about truth and honesty regarding the sharing of skills and communicating ideas and understanding. One participant talked a lot about 'things coming from the heart' and 'the more honest you are the more truthful you are.' These arts workers placed a lot of value on looking at things more deeply and taking responsibility for this aspect of community life which is also tied in to lifelong learning. One participant in regards to responsibility stated 'I think that we've (society) got a problem and the solution to that problem is people being more artful and for people who are professionally determining arts processes to become involved in mainstream processes.' The participants also felt they had a responsibility to the town in regards to



retaining its essence. To quote another participant 'I have a kind of responsibility as an artist.'

### **3. AESTHETIC SENSIBILITIES:**

The paradigm of living in the country as opposed to living in the city was discussed at length. As one participant said 'One reason I like to live in the country is the sense of community and the sense of helping each other to learn to expand and grow over a lifetime.' They discussed the inherent beauty in the landscape of this country town and how this could be affected by outsiders not seeing this. Another participant said 'We have a process of controlling those parts of developmental impacts on our life here and that's all controlled by the council, yet when you talk to them all they can do is say "well, really, we don't know...."' These rural arts workers seemed to have an inherent understanding of aesthetics - another major aspect of lifelong learning.

### **4. INTEGRATION:**

The question on cross-fertilisation of forms led onto one participants statement 'I love to mix and match all sorts of things and I also love working with people so, and everyone's different, so if you've got a medium where everyone can work together and their differences are honoured, then that's great.' The idea of 'honouring each other's differences is a skill that will be part of the lifelong learning society and these arts workers seemed to understand this. As another participant said 'establish social contexts that allow people, individuals, organisations of people and different groups to carry on with what they want to do.'

### **5. ARTISTS AS ALCHEMISTS:**

The word alchemy was mentioned several times over the course of the interviews and the idea that art speaks on different levels is relevant to deeper learning and lifelong learning.

The phrase 'a picture tells a thousand words' was quoted by one respondent in relation to different levels of understanding images and 'whether you have the vocabulary or the learning to understand what these images tell you' Another respondent talked about how alchemy is the 'meeting of science and art' and his work was largely centred around this so he said that alchemy was a 'really important word' for him.

## **6. TECHNOLOGY AND MEDIA:**

The importance of technology wasn't overlooked by the workers. One participant felt that artists and arts workers needed to utilise technology more and felt that they needed to come to terms with using the technology and the media instead of 'running a mile' as one respondent stated.

This study demonstrated the fact that some arts workers are aware of the need to develop their skills in this area although one participant said, 'as adults we've got a lot more fear associated with it.'

Galbraith discusses the use of technology and the media in regard to lifelong learning in the community. He asks the questions:

1. 'How can we reduce the "phobias" attached to the use of technology?
2. What will technology -user communities look like?
3. What are the social, financial, political, economic, psychological, cultural and so forth realities of engaging in technology to bring about lifelong learning communities."

(Galbraith, M.W. pp.24,25. See Appendix i.)

There is a growing demand for technology and media facilities in rural communities to be upgraded and developed. For lifelong learning to occur easily for all members of the community these tools and training programmes need to be more readily available.

## **Conclusion**

The above issues illustrate the nature of knowing that the participants developed through this period of research. The somewhat 'metaphysical' language and allusion needs a brief clarification. Almost all art workers examined worked within what we might call broadly the realm of improvisation. In doing so the model of knowledge and encounter is more of an 'unfolding' rather than a constructing of an art work. These art workers indicate that it is almost essential to ask the continuous question of what is it that is being formed in their processes? Moving away from the individual the art workers would seem to be indicating that the community of minds is a place which together they can create through practising various creative artistic endeavours. The dreaming of the artists noted above is their very drive to create. These artists are clearly engaged in a life-making force which is not only convincingly talked about as creating something for posterity but also a quality of life-experience. The choice to live in a remote rural community may be a reply to the cities which have become even more toxic. These artists indicate that art for them is not just liberation: arts for them is a way of being in life.

## CHAPTER 9

### NEW GROWTH AND DIRECTIONS FOR FURTHER RESEARCH

#### **Education of the Community**

The political, economical and cultural climates of rural communities in Australia at this present time are certainly in a state of flux. Much is being said in the media regarding development of tele-communications for instance. Therefore it is worth contemplating the fact that some rural areas may not have a great deal of respect for new innovations and the phrase 'lifelong learning' may be in vogue in academic circles but as one participant in this study said 'The lifelong learning process. What is the lifelong learning process - because I think the group got a bit diverse and didn't specifically address that question. Well, what is the lifelong learning process? I guess it's what we're all involved in isn't it?' The researcher felt that this question could be indicative of the larger community and therefore highlights the need for further investigation into how and whether the term 'lifelong learning' is understood by the general population. Has the new century's move towards economic rationalist thinking taken away from the individuals' need for lifelong learning? This question also has implications for further research.

The researcher felt that because of a lack of general exposure to this particular phrase 'lifelong learning' the participants didn't use it literally in their discussions although it underpinned their thinking which is shown in the various answers they gave during the interviews. The rural arts workers in a rural community could and should be at the pinnacle of introducing the community to the notion of lifelong learning. To quote Perrin again, 'In the new century, globally-oriented and fast-changing as it will be, we will need artists from all areas and walks of life' (1994). Whether rural arts workers will fully

acknowledge this responsibility of introducing lifelong learning to the community or whether it is too much to ask, is also an area for further research.

One way or another, our regional areas are being brought towards the new technologies much faster than in any other previous era, so the idea of regional identity, and an individual sense of identity and place is much more important now than it ever was. Many factors will play an important part in this creation of regional identity especially the arts and its workers.

### **Communities Needs and Wants**

Community needs and wants are an area for further investigation. The variables surrounding each community's needs and wants will be unique to each region. Rural arts workers have an important role to play in acting as bridges between the community and outsiders in so far as the arts and related activities are concerned. Through the arts they can find out what each sector of the community needs by collaborating in creative and imaginative ways. Festivals, workshops and cultural development activities are arts modes worthy of examination. Engaging in arts experiences can bridge isolation and address the unique needs in remote areas.

Further research in this area would be at a 'grass roots' level and foreshadowed by collaboration between groups of arts workers not only as individuals especially if the research were to include the idea of lifelong learning. Further dialogue needs to be constructed so that a unified voice can occur. When the dialogue is established, there will be a range of issues surrounding rural arts, lifelong learning and the community. At a symposium in Brisbane (Debates in Community Cultural Development 1996) there were representatives from all sectors of the community. This was a discussion at a national level regarding community arts. The same could be done on a smaller scale. It must be noted though, that the idea of lifelong learning through the arts wasn't given a mention

throughout the whole national debate. In some ways then, lifelong learning as an aspect of community arts is a `new product` and the question could be: "If it's there and it's useful, how do we make it accessible?" (See Appendix i.)

### **Policy: Government and Cultural**

In recent times local and regional governments have become more accepting and supportive of the creative processes within a community. They have also seen the long-term viability of these processes. Even so, rural arts workers cannot rest on their laurels so to speak. As one participant said `I've put a lot of work into the cultural policies development in this shire a couple of years ago as did ..... and it got to policy, it got written as a policy and it never got taken to Council and that is such a frustrating situation for those that were involved ...`

What needs to be looked at here, and this could be an area for further investigation, is the sustainability involved after the arts processes are started in a rural community.

Where do processes get `blocked` and by whom? The discontinuity of the art making process is of major concern, and unless the community is able to provide its own self-perpetuating momentum, along with the help of rural arts workers and the local government leaders, the situation won't change much.

There are some positive moves - although they are slow, and they seem to be happening sporadically. For example, the researcher has noticed lately that throughout Australia a few regional communities have been advertising for Community Cultural Development Officers. Eventually, every regional community should be able to afford to fund a position such as this, or alternatively provide funding for a local government worker or arts worker to train and specialise in Community Cultural Development work with an aspect of this training devoted to lifelong learning within the community.

### **Arts Management Courses**

Professional development for regional arts workers needs to occur on all levels, not just at an academic or university level (invariably outside most rural communities.) One important factor in sustaining community-based work will be the idea of complementary skills development within community organisations. High quality participation will be required as will good models of consultation and collaboration. The interconnectedness of community arts practitioners needs to occur with more integrity and nurturing occurring between these individuals rather than competitiveness.

Communities can become more involved in developing courses and tailoring them to suit the needs and wants of the residents, which can lead to an increased measure of community empowerment.

There are many opportunities for artists to become the leaders in a creative revolution within the rural community. To inspire this revolution, certain sectors of the community are required to have skills necessary to manage arts programmes and high quality participation. Rural arts workers are becoming an integral part of the local government and the community and need to be considered as a very important option for employment in rural areas. Lobbying the local councillors is an area for further investigation and requires an organisational commitment by groups of rural arts workers who have accessed community support. Accreditation processes for rural arts workers is vital in the scheme of arts management courses as this accreditation boosts self-esteem, confidence and gives arts workers the motivation and momentum they need to have their efforts recognised and valued.

The current needs in terms of providing training for volunteers were thoroughly discussed at a recent forum facilitated by the National Volunteer Training Programme in

the Australian Regional Arts Industry in Melbourne, Australia in November 1999. (See Appendix iii.)

### **Securing Venues**

The lack of appropriate venues that are multi-purpose and multi-disciplinary is certainly a weakness in most rural environments. As has been noted in the previous chapter schools are slow in becoming the multi-purpose sites they could and should be, even though this is an obvious place to start when looking for venues. Unearthing new sites for arts activities and lifelong learning in a rural community especially those that have heritage and architectural values is an exciting proposition and many regional towns would, and have, benefited from individuals who have done this. Public spaces and the way they are utilised in a country town would be an area for local Council and a group of arts workers to further investigate. The Council can develop guidelines to enhance the way these public areas are used.

The venues need to be active, not passive (as so many are in country towns) with creative dialogue set up between relevant organisations. This partnership, and the venue, must be dedicated to diversity, lifelong learning and the creation of new works based on local identity.

Participation and accessibility must be promoted so that the town can develop its own social sculpture through and with the arts as a force of inspiration.

If a new building is created it should reflect the character of the town and be a cost-effective facility that has mixed use availability. This can occur if the project is community driven where the residents have a greater degree of control over resource allocation.



Where existing buildings are used these can be adapted to suit the arts activities requested by the community. All over Australia buildings such as old powerhouses, fire stations, warehouses and old offices are being converted into places where arts activities are occurring very successfully. These places often become a major focal point for the town, especially if it is tourist-based.

As Galbraith states in his paper, *Community-Based Organisations and the Delivery of Lifelong Learning Opportunities*:

‘Community-based educational providers such as libraries, religious institutions, senior citizen centres, museums, social and fraternal organisations, business and industry, farmer institutes, community colleges, state and regional universities, vocational and technical institutions, health-related organisations, the mass media, to name a few are positional to assist in the design and development of community-based lifelong learning communities...’ (Galbraith, 1995 p.19,20)

### **Accessing Funding**

The concept of more widespread mentoring needs to be investigated, not only to secure extra income for artists, but also to acquire and share specialist knowledge. By having some sponsorship for instance, artists are able to travel outside their region to gain this knowledge which will then in turn enhance the community. Computer assisted mentoring is an area for further research, as this would allow individual artists to have mentors from other locations at a distance to the local community.

The availability of funding has increased in recent years although gaining access to these funds still proves difficult to some sections of the population especially indigenous, youth and people with special needs. For some the application and acquittal forms prove too

daunting a task to fill. A possible survey into ways to simplify these forms could be further investigated.

Strategic partnerships between artists, the community and businesses can be set up where each group benefits from the project or event. Outcomes can be drawn up which suit what the community itself is looking for. The projects need to reflect what's happening rather than trying to fit the community into something that it might not need or desire. This kind of survey can be done through leaflets or the local paper and radio station. Depending on the individual and the size of the project, the funding bodies need to look at flexibility and restrictions that are placed on such things as new and innovative works within a community.

**Note:**

The researcher welcomes the use of this model by interested community members and organisations including:

- Community arts workers/state-widecommunity arts networks
- Community cultural development project initiators,managers and workers
- Rural shire councils
- Local government/state government agencies
- Schools

## **Appendix i**

### **Community-Based Education and Lifelong Learning Questions**

Several research agendas may be grounded in quantitative and qualitative studies and address such questions as:

1. How do communities view their learning opportunities beyond the notion of school?
2. What does a lifelong learning community-based education community look like?
3. What is it that community residents desire if given options and selections?
4. What are the enhancers and barriers to the development of lifelong learning communities? The enhancers and barriers to participation of community residents?
5. Are community members getting their learning needs met through non-traditional means? If so, what means are they using?
6. What community coordination and cooperation is needed to enhance lifelong learning?
7. What training and education is needed for community leaders to understand the economic, political and personal benefits of investing in lifelong learning opportunities?
8. What do communities need to do to revitalize the `community spirit` and believe in the concept and practise of lifelong learning and education?
9. What training is needed for future educators (professional or life) to promote and work with lifelong learning programs and agendas?
10. What will it mean for the community to increase the number of adults engaging in lifelong learning?
11. What role should each individual community-based provider play in the development of a lifelong learning based community?
12. What should the role of policy-makers and funding sources be in the development and maintenance of a lifelong learning agenda?

13. How could technology enhance the development and delivery of lifelong learning opportunities?

14. What role should mentoring have in the development and growth of lifelong learners?

(Galbraith, M.W., 1995, p.23.)

Appendix ii

Edith Cowan University  
Faculty of Education (Drama)

CONSENT FORM

Project Title: Drama Praxis: Rural Arts Workers &  
Lifelong Learning

Researcher: Sue Gibson Ph: (W) [REDACTED]  
(H) [REDACTED]

Hi,

My name is Sue Gibson and I am conducting a study for my Masters in Education (Drama) at Edith Cowan University. The purpose of this research is to describe the everyday experiences of rural arts workers such as yourself. My interest in this area evolved out of my work as a theatre director and more recently as a reflective drama practitioner.

As part of this research I would like to meet with you and discuss your thoughts and feelings on rural arts workers and the lifelong learning process. This information will enrich the plight of people such as yourselves and it is hoped that this study will increase awareness around the arts and the people who work for them in small communities.

The interviews will be informal and last for approximately forty-five minutes. During this process I would also like to conduct field observations and case studies. The information gathered will be recorded and then transcribed. These records will remain anonymous and the only other person with access to this data will be my supervisor. The data will be kept for five years in a secure place and then it will be destroyed.

Participation is voluntary and if at any point in the study you wish to withdraw, please feel free to do so.

In the final report no participants will be named and quotations will remain anonymous.

THIS IS TO CERTIFY THAT I, \_\_\_\_\_  
hereby agree to participate as a volunteer in the abovenamed project

I hereby give permission to be interviewed and for these interviews to be tape recorded. I understand that only the researcher will have access to the data obtained.

Participant	_____	Date	_____
Witness	_____	Date	_____
Researcher	_____	Date	_____
Witness	_____	Date	_____

Key questions and areas included:

- What does the volunteer want?
- What is the training that is most needed?
- Is this already being provided by someone else?
- Delegates own experiences in working with and training volunteers.
- Do people want formal or informal training – for example, should it provide pathways to articulate into additional training?
- What is the scope of the program – just who is a 'regional volunteer'? Should the program include those working for established facilities, or are we looking at the arts council volunteer network only?
- What are the best strategies for delivering this training? At local, state and national levels.
- How could the program be structured? Should the training be accredited or not, or a mix of accredited and informal.

The key issues discussed above is summarised in the following list, which we've called 'Challenges'.

### **Challenges**

- Financial Economic
- Loyal Reward/Recognition
- Volunteer Management
- Ongoing overtime
- Create Resources
- Volunteers and paid staff
- Sharing skills
- Supporting each other
- Train the trainer
- Succession/growth paths
- Definition of Volunteers
- Insurance/Liability
- Different types of Volunteers
- Giving them the ARTS experience
- Strategic Development
- Motivation "FUN!"

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This training needs analysis found that Local Government employees who have direct involvement or responsibilities in Community Cultural Development and Cultural Planning desire to have access to on-the-job training which would enable them to immediately acquire the specific skills needed to undertake their community development projects. Most of the identified training could be classified as generic as it includes topics such as Project Management, Finance and Administration and Sponsorship, Marketing and Promotion. The important training topics that are Community Cultural Development based include Community Consultation, Cultural Mapping with Communities and Evaluation of the economic and social benefits of Cultural Planning projects.

This training needs analysis also identified that there are a number of other training related issues that Local Governments will need to address to ensure successful adoption of Community Cultural Development and Cultural Planning initiatives. For instance, is training the answer to Local Government integrating Community Cultural Development into operational activities?

There is confusion within Local Government with the terms "community cultural development" and "cultural planning". Local Governments who took part in this project did not readily identify that community development is the umbrella under which sits the disciplines of cultural development and cultural planning. It will be necessary for some mutually acceptable definitions to be adopted and conveyed on the terminology used throughout Australia to clarify the concept of community cultural development.

Widespread consultation on both a national and statewide basis indicated that there are varying degrees of successful examples of Local Government's adoption of Community Cultural Development as a strategic initiative. It became obvious that the most recent successful examples of community cultural development are where Local Government Associations employ dedicated individuals who champion the goals of cultural development. Successful examples of community cultural development activities which are seen to showcase "good practice" are those projects which have been fully integrated into Council strategic and operational activities.

This project has highlighted that Local Government generally tends to assign operational activities to discrete functional areas where project activities are progressed through the various council departments and professional groups. This practice was raised as a barrier to the implementation and integration of cultural development activities during the interview and national validation process of this training needs analysis. The successful examples of where Local Government has integrated Community Cultural Development and Cultural Planning activities into its strategic planning processes came about because of a commitment from Council and senior executive which ensured support at all levels and fostered cooperative working relationships between the disciplines.

Local Government has tended to "pigeon-hole" community cultural development activities as "arts" related and have not embraced the concept in a holistic manner. Community cultural development and cultural planning is a strategic process which requires input from all professional groups for a Council to reap the benefits in social and economic terms. It was found that Community Cultural Development in its current form was not high on the agenda of many Local Governments or of their professional associations.

The research identified that current education and training has been developed at both the tertiary and entry level for Local Government employees. The gap that exists is where individuals are employed in Community Cultural Development activities but are in urgent need of "hands-on" skills. The most appropriate mechanisms for delivery is through a series of short structured programs complemented by a mentoring process which is delivered on-the-job on a project by project basis.

Currently Local Government Competency Standards do not recognise Community Cultural Development as a core work field. A large proportion of the possible appropriate standards were seen to be included in the industry sector Arts, Libraries & Museums. It has been recommended that Competency Standards be developed to meet the needs of Community Cultural Development and that the existing standards be reviewed to include these requirements.

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