

## ***Opportunities for Mobility and More – The state of play of Australia’s cultural mobility (part 1)***

### **00:00 – 01:23**

Kerrine: Hello and welcome to another podcast hosted by culture360.ASEF.org, the arts and culture portal of the Asia-Europe Foundation, ASEF.

I am Kerrine and I manage the activities of culture360 and I am also your host for today’s episode.

So in today's podcast, we are looking into the updated Mobility Funding Guide for Australia that we’ve just recently launched on culture360. And this guide has been a long time in the making because we did the first update, maybe in 2015. So it’s been ten years since then.

For the guide this time, it’s actually one of our most comprehensive guides to date. So we have about a hundred grants and support schemes that really look into helping professionals and practitioners in the arts and culture to finance their international travel.

So we have Claire, Claire, who is the Editor of culture 360 and who has also helped us with this very extensive research of the guide. And she will shed light on what the guide looks at, you know, who are the main funders, what is being funded, and also what can we look out for in the guide.

So hi, Claire, welcome to the podcast. Could you tell us a bit about yourself, the work that you do and why culture mobility is important to you?

### **01:24 – 02:47**

Claire: Sure. Firstly, thank you for having me on the podcast. It was a great experience to be working on the guide. As you mentioned, I am the Editor for culture 360, which is the Asia-Europe Foundation's platform for arts and culture between Asia and Europe. I source a lot of opportunities, news and events between the two regions.

And I also work for [On the Move](#), which is a European network that provides resources for artists and cultural professionals who want to work internationally. So I'm often looking for opportunities and keeping an eye out and sourcing different funded opportunities for the international mobility of artists. So it was, it was really great to be able to work on this guide.

Also, because I am very interested in working on information platforms. So there is lots of great initiatives out there. And lots of really interesting international cultural exchange happening. And I think these platforms are really important as a way to share these experiences and good practices. And so, a guide like this can really help people find these opportunities.

So I think what I found particularly interesting about working on this guide is that, so for my work for both culture360 and On the Move, I found that although I know that there is many opportunities in Australia, but I was not finding as many that I could put on these platforms because they weren’t necessarily open for international applicants.

So it was a chance to really see what was going on for Australians wanting to go overseas as well, and be able to be really comprehensive.

**02:48 – 05:59**

Kerrine: Thank you, Claire. So I think that really gave us an overview of what you do and why cultural mobility matters. So now, for listeners who might not be quite as familiar with Australia's arts and cultural sector, how would you describe the current landscape?

Claire: I guess first I just want to preface this with that every arts and cultural sector in different countries is very complex. So obviously I come in with a certain understanding and a certain perspective. And it is very hard to kind of have a big overview of everything that is going on. But I wanted to raise perhaps a few topics that I think are important, when thinking about the arts and cultural scene in Australia.

Firstly, that thinking about the kind of make up in the history of Australia. It's quite a diverse country. There's been a long history of migration. So for example, almost 30% of the population is born in another country. Currently some of the biggest migrant groups being from England, India, China, New Zealand and the Philippines, for example.

Almost 20% of people who live in Australia speak another language at home. For example, Mandarin, Arabic, Cantonese and Vietnamese being some of the larger language groups in the country. However, there's been studies that show that there is a lack of diversity in the arts.

For example, 18% of the main characters on TV are non-Caucasian, compared to 32% of the actual population. 6% of those working in publishing are non-Caucasian and 10% of artists don't have English as their first language. So you can see although that there is a lot of diversity in the national population, this is not always reflected in those who've got opportunities in the arts.

So I think this diversity is quite interesting, particularly as we are talking about the international mobility of artists and kind of thinking about cultural competencies and how diaspora might play a role in kind of increasing cultural competencies in specific programmes.

Another point to make is size of the country as well. It is quite a geographically large country, with a population of about over 27 million. However, 70% of professional artists live and work in capital cities. And then this is kind of compared to at a regional, remote and very remote areas, which makes up a geographically large component of the country and you have about 2% of the population living in these areas.

The challenge of finding audiences and finding markets in, in such a context can lead to the necessity of international mobility. But it can also be a challenge to kind of staying and working in this context.

Australia has really for many years, is trying to make more connections as well with Asia, with various kind of policy initiatives. Kind of looking to the region more than, than necessarily only looking to these sort of bigger markets in the US or the UK, for example.

Kerrine: Yeah so I think there were a few interesting points that I picked up on, and I think we'll explore them in the next few questions of the podcast. What I found interesting was also that you mentioned the diversity in population, but then this diversity isn't quite reflected in the arts and culture sector.

And also in terms of the size of the country, it's relatively huge. Then again, majority of the population live in the urban cities or the capital areas. So then what does it mean in terms of access and distribution of resources to those who are outside of the capital cities? So that's something that we'll explore in the podcast as well.

#### **06:00 – 09:31**

Kerrine: Yeah, so let's just dive into maybe looking at what the funding landscape in Australia is like. For those of you who are listening in, you'll notice that within the guide, we've split it into national resources, government sources of funding, but also regional and city level funding. And then you also have your private sector funding. So that really is different players that you look at. So maybe Claire could also help us to understand what are the differences between these levels of funding.

Claire: Yep, sure. So there's the funding at the national level is principally by Creative Australia, which is the primary funder, and they have international mobility among other schemes for individual artists and arts professionals. It's a government funded body that makes decisions primarily through a peer review process.

There's also the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, that has a number of institutes that are focused on particular countries or regions. And this is where you can really see the focus on Asia in the kind of, I guess, cultural diplomacy context that there really have many more opportunities focused towards the region. So that's kind of on a national level.

And then there are six states and two territories in Australia, each of which have their own quite robust arts funding. There're different bodies for, for the arts, for film and for regional arts. So you see there as well that they are the state and territory level, there is a lot of funding for international mobility there as well.

And then if we go down a level again, there's also the local council level. In this guide, there aren't so many examples of this. There's over 500 local councils in Australia. So there is a couple that are included in the guide because they overtly state that they fund international mobility. But there are many others that might fund a project. For example, big cities like the city of Melbourne have an annual grant programme for activities that are held within their borders. They don't specifically say that they kind of accept international artists, but basically their only requirement is that the event takes place within the city.

So feasibly in these kind of cases, if an international artist was interested in coming and performing in Melbourne for example, they could connect with local organisations or local artists to kind of form a collaboration. And potentially that could take place in the city of Melbourne.

What you might find is that the actual flight or the actual mobility might not be covered, but artist fees and other costs might be covered.

So I think there's definitely many more opportunities at the local council level that could be really interesting. And also, it is not just the capital cities. There are many local councils that are really interested in bringing diverse artists to their communities. One thing is that it does require potentially a local partner or a collaborator to kind of really open up those opportunities.

And one area that is not explicitly about I guess international mobility, could be interesting is, is PhD programmes for example. There's a lot of creative arts PhD programmes that are funded that accept international students. So that's kind of another avenue where people can kind of come and explore the Australian context.

There are also private foundations as well that offer grants and projects. I've kind of highlighted the most relevant ones in the guide. When thinking about how for example, an arts organisation might put together a programme where they are inviting lots of international guests. Often, it's really a patchwork of these different kinds of funders. There might be, have access to a sort of a three-year programme funding from Creative Australia, which they supplement maybe with state government funding, which then they might be going to some of the foundations, they might kind of be going to the embassies.

So I think the, kind of looking at the different layers, it gives an idea of the different structures that are available.

### **09:32 – 11:33**

Kerrine: From what I've noticed from the guide, there are a lot of opportunities for people to travel outside of Australia or within Australia. But what about incoming mobility? I know you touched a little bit on that, but is there any opportunities for those who are looking to travel to Australia?

Claire: Yeah, and I think that's, that's a very good point that you raise. And I guess that's partly why I was talking about collaborations and the PhDs, is because that there is not as much support for incoming mobility.

So outgoing is where say, an Australian might want to travel overseas. And the majority of the funding, particularly the, the public funding, is directed towards Australian citizens or residents. Whereas incoming mobility, so international artist or an artist who lives in another country wants to come to Australia is much more limited.

So there are a couple of residencies that that we found in the research that do support this. Some of them might be bilateral. For example, the British Council might sponsor a residency programme, where the majority of the residency, paid residencies are for Australian residents. But there might be sort of one scheme which is open to British artists for example. There's a few others, like one for example, in the farm in Western Australia, which is open to international artists based anywhere and it's a funded programme. So I think that's an area that, it would be kind of nice maybe to see some changes.

For example, Creative Australia in their project funding. The main applicant needs to be a resident or of Australia or an Australian citizen, but they can involve international artists or organisations in the project. So I think this makes it challenging for people who for example, I think I have this idea, I have this thought. I don't really know how it is going to pan out. I don't really have any partners. I don't know the context that well. So I just want to go and see what's happening on the ground.

So these kind of 'go and see' and discovery kind of opportunities for international artists coming to Australia are much more rare. So I guess it requires that the artists might be funded, for example by their own governments or have some kind of external funding that they can use to do that.

### **11:34 – 15:24**

Kerrine: Yeah. So I think it's interesting that you pointed out a few gaps that current opportunities that are offered doesn't quite cover. And I think this is not unique to Australia, that a lot of opportunities require professionals from at least two countries, one of which being the receiving country and the one that, that you're potentially interested in collaborating with. That is quite a common trend between cross-cultural collaboration opportunities nowadays.

Yeah, and also the point that you brought up about 'go and see' and discovery international opportunities. Especially those kind of trips where there's no outcome necessarily needed, where you're just there to explore and network and just to see what's going on. So yeah, those are I feel very interesting insights that that we wouldn't have known if we haven't done the guide.

Claire: Yeah, for sure. And I think I mean that, that the 'go and see' kind of grants are always more challenging to fund because you don't really know what you're going to get out of it. Particularly thinking about developing collaborations or international projects. This idea of taking the time to explore a place, and to get to know a place and the partners and not having to rush that process is very important.

Sort of thinking about the types of things that are funded. So a lot of the international opportunities are very short-term. In some cases, it's to kind of go to a particular platform or to a particular event to kind of showcase your work. It could be a residency of two months or three months, but you only would do that once.

But I think the challenge is being able to follow up and being able to kind of do repeat visits. And so to build your cultural awareness or cultural competency. As for an example, an Australian going overseas to a particular cultural context, to be able to take the time to learn the language, to build relationships. I think that's really a challenge.

There was a report that looked at the exchanges between Victorian artists going to Asia and the kind of relationships there. So Victoria is one of the one of the states, which has the capital city of Melbourne. So there's a lot of migration from Asia into the capital city of Melbourne.

So it's a bit of a dated report, but I haven't really seen another report that kind of looks in such detail at this. They were making the observation that many of these organisations working in Asia were really working on – so the funding that they received, firstly, was mainly their own personal funds or from government funds. And that they were very kind of small experimental projects.

And I think to make financially sustainable project can be more challenging in certain in certain areas. So if you think of an Australian artist with the artist fees that they expect, putting on performances in for example, Southeast Asia. The ticketing cost will be very different to what they might expect in a city like, Melbourne or Sydney.

So they needed the government support to be able to do these kind of more risky projects. And also, it was the more kind of smaller scale organisations or individuals who were more kind of agile and able to adapt to these contexts.

But there was also an observation that the organisations working between Victoria and Asia, there was a real lack of cultural competency. About 50% of the organisations had difficulty with intercultural communication. There was a lack of language skills. There was a difficulty in understanding the local bureaucracies and the logistics. So things like contracts and tax and visas, and there was just kind of a lack of time and opportunity to be able to travel in these contexts.

So I think that's kind of really important to raise that there still kind of needs to be more work in this area. And that it's kind of very hard to sort of work out models that make these very financially stable and sustainable without having the extra government support.

Kerrine: I think one thing that as we're looking at cultural mobility opportunities, it's not just about funding the travel to be there, but also travel for understanding the country that we're going to be in like Claire mentioned, because it takes time to build all of these such skills.

And I think one thing that can be quite helpful is in the form of the report that Claire was mentioning earlier, because such documentation actually serves as a form of institutional memory, if I can say.

So it helps us to track, have there been changes in the field, who is still funding mobility and what are the changes that have been made since a couple of years ago and now. So such reports would be very helpful and very useful.

Claire: Yeah, definitely.

#### **15:25 – 20:02**

Kerrine: And as we talked about earlier, because of the size of the country and the diversity within the country, a lot of programmes and initiatives seem to be concentrated in the larger cities.

So Claire, do you think there needs to be more support made available and distributed to those outside of the main cities?

Claire: There's a, I guess a few factors here. In terms of those based in regional areas, remote areas, they still have access to the national funding and to the state funding. And I think particular states and territories are very aware of the challenges. So you have definitely more regional funding support in states like Western Australia or territories like the Northern Territory in the state of Queensland as well, South Australia.

So I think there are a few challenges here. So one of which is to feel like you need to move to a capital city. Thinking particularly performing arts, where you need kind of a larger group to make your practice, but also a larger audience potentially.

There's been reports that have shown that for performing artists, they tend to move out of the, the regional and remote areas to move to the capital cities for this need. I think one part of it is to provide enough funding, maybe to allow people who want to stay in remote areas to, to really be able to practice there.

And in a way, I know we're talking about mobility funding, but also having the right to not have to be mobile as well, is I think really important in this context.

And then also, being able to offer diverse artistic practices, whether they be national or international, to smaller audiences in these remote areas, I think is also very important. So that's also I guess, what these regional funders are really looking to do, that both these elements to support a sustainable career in regional and remote areas, and also to be able to also offer a diversity of practices or communities. Government support is very important for that because it's not really financially sustainable to necessarily do a tour to really remote areas where you don't have enormous audiences.

But then also the cost that it takes to tour to these areas might actually be more expensive than touring internationally from, say Melbourne to Singapore. Given the challenges of mobility or the lack of the lack of mobility routes that there are. So there are so many elements that need the additional support.

Kerrine: I thought it was interesting that you pointed out about how it might be more expensive to travel within Australia as compared to let's say, traveling from Australia to Singapore.

And I think also the point that you talked about accessibility, and why it's important for say people to stay where they are and not travel outside of where they're based at. Because if you're thinking about audiences who are based in, let's say the smaller cities, they need such cultural offerings as well. So if everyone is moving out, it's a bit like a brain drain trend, if I can put it.

Claire: And I think it's a challenge that's been studied a lot in the context of Australia. I live outside of Australia now and I sort of talk about mobility a lot. And I feel like kind of the idea of mobility feels a bit different in different contexts. So I think when I was in Australia and working in Australia, I don't know, I just had a different kind of idea of mobility.

So when I was growing up, there was this idea that everything, all the arts kind of content from outside is better than what we can produce inside. You know, you need that stamp of approval. You have to go overseas to say, look, I've made it and I've done tours in the US and they recognise how great I am before you can kind of come back to Australia and be recognised in Australia.

Kerrine: And I think it's a very valid point that you're bringing that you're bringing up because I, I felt the same way as well. And I think that also highlights how messy and how complex cultural mobility really is. It's a term that cannot be quite easily defined because things that are being changed all the time. It depends on the context that we're in, the environment that we're in. It's a very fluid term.

Claire: Yeah, definitely.

And I think in the context in, in Australia and I grew up in Melbourne, which is a very multicultural city as well. There was so much there that was kind of intercultural and kind of contexts that I didn't know about within the city as well.

Yeah, thinking, reflecting again on this sort of this idea of cultural competencies and kind of not having enough time in, in certain contexts as well. And I think looking at the kind of communities that are already there in a country and the diaspora is also really important way to sort of build this idea of cultural competency as well.

So it's not always about having to travel internationally, but also to look in your own community to see what's there as well, and kind of different ways of building relationships.

Kerrine: So actually maybe just a thought that the narrative should shift a little bit that, grant programmes should fund individuals rather than funding the programmes itself. You need to give people the flexibility, to kind of decide what they really want to do with the money that they receive. Instead of it being very prescriptive in a way.

Claire: Yeah and I think that that definitely exists in the funding programmes that there are I particularly the kind of project funding schemes that are very open, but again like what we discussed before, it's very much outgoing mobility.

### **20:03 – 21:00**

Kerrine: Thank you Claire, that was incredibly insightful. As we wrap up the first part of today's podcast, we've heard about the current state of cultural mobility in Australia – who's funding, where the support is going and some of the gaps that still exist, especially outside of major cities.

Thank you so much to our listeners for joining us today! If you want to explore the Mobility Funding Guide for Australia or learn about ongoing mobility open calls in Asia and Europe, do remember to check out the resources and opportunities on [culture360.ASEF.org](http://culture360.ASEF.org), the arts & culture portal of the Asia-Europe Foundation. We look forward to bringing you more insights in the next podcast,



where we discuss what mobility really means in the Australian context as we look at internal mobility.