

## ***Opportunities for Mobility and More – What does ‘mobility’ mean in Australia? (part 2)***

### **00:00 – 01:35**

Kerrine: Hello and welcome back 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 the first part of our podcast, we discussed the state of play of cultural mobility in Australia and takeaways from the newly updated mobility funding guide for Australia. We looked at who funds mobility and what are some funding opportunities available for both artists and cultural professionals to support their cross-border travels. If you missed that episode, do go back and listen for a helpful overview of the Australia's funding structure and current trends in cultural mobility.

Today, in part 2 of our podcast, we are shifting the conversation from who funds mobility to what stands in the way of cultural mobility in Australia. Together with Claire, the researcher of our latest mobility funding guide, we are looking at the barriers to both international and national mobility in Australia.

Welcome back Claire! Let's dive straight into the questions.

What were some of your key observations when you were working on the research for the guide? What is being funded, who is being funded and where the more popular mobility destinations are?

### **01:35 – 04:07**

Claire: I think one of the main observations was that there is not as much incoming mobility as there is outgoing. I guess in terms of changes between the past guide and this new one, one of the key observations was the restructuring of grants. What kind of grants are given? But how are they given in the requirements? Particularly for the government funders, was the one that changed the most.

I mean I wasn't really looking at the bulk of funding or whether there's more or less funding. But I think definitely with changes in cultural policy on the national level and also on a state and territory level, you could see that there were different opportunities out there and different naming. So where it used to be sort of the Arts Council of Australia, now it's Creative Australia.

A lot of the state and some territories are also changing from arts to a more open kind of idea of creative? I think potentially if you went down and looked at who was receiving the funding, you could also see some changes going on there.

Particularly on the sort of medium to small organisations who might have been funded for many, many years. Maybe with some changes they might lose their institutional funding. But that's not something that's really captured in the guide as such.

In terms of where people go, that's kind of challenging to see. Because the funding requirements are quite open. Apart from a few key events or key residencies, where you go is very open.

So you might have some kind of agreements that have been going on for a long time. For example, with the residency in Paris, that's very well established. Or to key sector events, particularly in film. You can see that there's a real focus on being able to attend these events and being able to screen your work at certain events.

But aside from that, the project funding, the professional development funding is very open. So it's very hard to see where people are going.

In terms of priorities, there was an impact report from 2020 to 2021 from the, what was then called the Australian Council of the Arts. And they had 30% of investments for the international strategy was to Europe. 25% was to Asia, 21% was to North America, and 8% was the rest of the world. Obviously, maybe things have changed since that report came out. But that kind of gives a bit of an idea of where the interest lies at least on a national level.

And then I guess on the state and territory level, like I mentioned, some states might have much more of an interest in a particular region than another.

In this report, it was sort of looking at, of the people who travel, what kind of activities do they tend to do. So looking at, for example in Asia, there was more capacity building, professional development and knowledge sharing programmes. Whereas to Europe, if I remember correctly, it was more a focus on experimental, cutting-edge technology projects.

It's hard to know who's driving those trends. If it's the artists or the organisations, if it's the opportunities that are there, if it's the key events that they're kind of going to. It's hard to know where this is coming from.

#### **04:08 – 05:22**

Kerrine: Actually I was just thinking about the mobility funding guides for ASEAN that we did last year. And actually I noticed something very similar to what you pointed out, a lot of opportunities to travel within Asia is actually focused on relationship building, as you mentioned, and also that capacity building component, that knowledge sharing component.

You mentioned for those going to Europe for example, what I noticed in the ASEAN guides is also that a lot of niche art forms are being funded. So for instance, you have things like opera, ballet.

Claire: Yeah, yeah. Those kind of more classical. Yeah. I mean, you mentioned ballet and opera and I think definitely from the Australian perspective, Europe is the place to go for those kinds of art forms, no?

And maybe it's also thinking about different hubs that there are. So I remember talking to someone who's working ceramics. You know you have to go to these ateliers to learn certain skills. So that was like the hub for that particular technique as well. And I think maybe we haven't

mentioned it yet. But I think it's worth saying as well, that there's many kind of international opportunities that aren't listed in the guide. So this is really only the opportunities related to Australia.

So there's obviously lots of international funding. For example, a residency that in Europe that funds artists from anywhere in the world obviously is open to Australians as well. So there's a separate international section that really looks at those opportunities.

### **05:23 – 09:03**

Kerrine: Yeah. And that that actually opens up a whole new list of funding schemes, for people who are looking to travel internationally.

We could look at the next question, where we talk a little bit about the challenge of internal mobility in Australia. We have touched on a few points very briefly in the first part. And in this part maybe we could look at why it's important and what approaches Australian mobility funders have adopted to circumvent this challenge.

Claire: As we discussed earlier, this idea of being able to stay within regional, remote, very remote areas is very important and you can see that in the funding. That's not always included in the guide because it is more focused towards national mobility or national touring or sustainable careers in these areas and supporting the smaller organisations for example, that might be working in regional, remote or very remote areas or the artists themselves who want to stay there.

So I think that's something that's quite maybe particular in this context and I'm sure we can find it in other funding contexts in different countries as well that have such large areas that are less populated.

So how can we facilitate the mobility to these areas, knowing that the mobility is expensive to get there. For example, there are less routes to get there. There are fewer flights, there might be no flights at all. So this kind of mobility needs to be really supported.

And I think this idea of national mobility is also really important because of, I guess the diversity that you would find. And this is perhaps not just in Australia, but in any country, no? My experience growing up in Melbourne is very different to someone's experience growing up in regional or very remote Western Australia.

And I think also within the city itself, I spoke a little bit about the diversity in Melbourne. There's such cultural diversity within the city that I know nothing about as well. And I think there's also a bit of a rural urban divide, particularly in Australia. Maybe this happens everywhere. And I think you can see in Europe, that there's sort of more attention being paid to this idea of the rural and experience of living in rural and working from rural areas can be quite different.

So as I was looking at the guide and researching for the guide, I did notice that there was some funding opportunities or organisations that were really looking to make these national connections.

So an example is a project I found that was funding Australian artists from Adelaide to go to Sydney. And I think this speaks to what I was saying in the first part of the podcast, that sometimes artists might feel the need to move to these bigger cities.

This programme was quite interesting; I think it was in the visual arts that was funding South Australian artists to go and do a residency in Sydney. So it meant that they could have exposure in Sydney for these particular key organisations without having to go there to live. So it was kind of creating these relationships, while supporting artists to stay in Adelaide. So that's kind of still an urban, urban example.

But I was also seeing examples of exchanges between say, Sydney and rural New South Wales. So that would kind of be a reciprocal exchange between artists living in each of those places, to kind of share their experience of working from these different contexts and how that kind of informs their creative practice. So I think these are really interesting examples of trying to bridge this urban rural divide.

Reflecting upon the different experiences within the national border is also quite an interesting approach as well. There are such diversity and differences, and you can learn so much from the way different people have working, because of where they are based and because of such a different context.

I think it's an interesting thing to kind of foster to not think about mobility as only having to go overseas.

#### **09:04 – 10:12**

Kerrine: Yeah. Just to add on, something that I remembered while looking through the guide, is also how certain grant schemes have categorised what remote and very remote actually means. And they have a certain criteria of what constitutes remote and very remote.

So that actually really gives you an idea of how huge or how diverse Australia is, that you need to have such a category to help people understand where you belong to, and what kind of funding you're eligible for. So I think that's quite unique in the context of Australia. And that's why we brought up the point about why internal and national mobility is quite an important aspect.

Claire: Yeah, definitely. And I think in terms of funding. So there's the, regional Australia is a funding body. And different states have different kind of regional funding schemes as well. So there's this need to say, what is regional and really remote.

But yeah, kind of working out a definition because that then kind of trickles down into well, how do you create this sustainable practice? How do you tour? What kind of costs are involved? Because I think the costs are very different in terms of moving and living in different areas. So I think these kind of definitions are quite important for that.

Kerrine: It provides clarity and structure.

### **10:13 – 12:16**

Kerrine: So if we also look deeper into the issue of national and internal mobility. One interesting observation that I've made is also that, from the guide itself, there seems to be an availability of funding support for opportunities that arise at a very short notice or at a very last minute. Maybe we could also hear Claire's perspective on why it is crucial for mobility funders to think about supporting both short- and long-term artistic mobility and how significant that is in the context of Australia.

Claire: Yeah, I think these are quite interesting, these short or quick response grants. Because they're grants that you get a reply in. I'm not sure exactly when, but say you get a reply in four weeks of whether you've got the grant or not. Whereas most grants would sort of take a couple of months to go through the process.

So I think these quick response grants are very interesting, particularly in international mobility or international projects. Different countries all have very different processing cycles in terms of arts funding and opportunities.

So then you have to really think about, okay, if I want to be in this venue, I have to apply for their programme at this particular time in order to get the acceptance to then go for this grant. And so it's these kinds of cycles, no? Whereas when you're working internationally, if you're doing international project, these cycles might be very different.

And there might not have such a well-established cycle. The funding might come in at the last minute and say, okay, we need to respond now because we didn't know about this funding that we received from say, an international funder. We can now run this programme, but we have to run it in six months. We have to get it finished quickly because of different funding cycles.

So I think these quick response grants are really useful for being able to be agile and adapt to these different bureaucracies, these different processes, these different cycles in the international context.

And it might also be in some cases, you might be accepted to showcase in a particular event. But that acceptance doesn't kind of work in these really slow grant cycles. So that's the kind of gap that these quick response grants fill. So I think that's particularly important when working internationally to have this agility.

### **12:17 – 15:18**

Kerrine: Yes. Yeah. So we're at the last question, a little bit more looking ahead. So what would be needed to advocate for funding stronger funding in internal and international and national cultural mobility within Australia?

Claire: Yeah. So I think one thing that we've touched upon in these conversations is the lack of incoming mobility which is funded. So I think, that's one area that could be quite interesting to explore further. There're obviously ways to kind of make partnerships work and international artists can be funded in different ways.

But these kinds of very open calls, which are very clear and which are kind of more open to this exploratory support for international artists coming into Australia, I think would be very interesting.

And perhaps also, we kind of mentioned this idea of the reciprocal travel as well. These tend to happen in a bit more short-term projects. So the funding guides are really aimed at ongoing long-term funds. So there are some initiatives that aren't included here that might be, for example, a bilateral project that goes on for three years between Australia and Thailand, where they support residencies between the two countries.

I think the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, the funding that they have is quite interesting in that way, in that it is kind of intended to be more reciprocal. But that's also very closely linked to the government funding and cultural diplomacy as well.

Which kind of leads to the next point that could be of interest is that I guess, the government funding is relatively stable in Australia. But sometimes that has led to maybe interventions of who gets funded and how? And questions from the arts sector as to this peer review process. How robust is it? Is it really arm's length funding? And I think it's always healthy to have a real balance between public funding and funding from other sources.

And we can see in, in different national contexts that really strong organisations are losing their funding from this lack of diversity. And I think it's a challenge to be able to find the right balance.

So we've spoken a lot about how some kind of opportunities really need this public funding. Thinking about regional and remote areas. You know, you can't expect that to be financially sustainable all the time. So you need the support. But perhaps we need to think also about, the diversity of funders.

Kerrine: So that was the last, question. I think we have covered a lot of ground actually – Australia's unique geographical barriers, and challenges, especially when considering about cultural mobility in Australia. To our listeners, if you are residing in Australia or you are wishing to travel and exchange for arts and cultural projects in Australia, you could consider checking out our newly published mobility funding guide.

And I also like to thank Claire for being a part of this conversation.

Claire: Thank you Kerrine, for inviting me. It's been great to be able to have a chat about the different contexts of funding in Australia.