

Have you ever felt that you would like to be a part of a bigger community? That your purpose in life isn't fully realised? That you have the means to contribute more to people? That you have skills that can help others? Or that your life could have a greater value if it had a stronger meaning?

This is how I felt; it was like floating on the sea, without swimming, a surface treatment instead of in-depth detail. Eventually, I found that stronger meaning in thinking about art and the community and realising now; it probably started when I was growing up in New Zealand. We were a family of eight, poverty-stricken, and remote to the rest of the world. Resources were limited, and with such a large family, we faced judgement and discrimination every day. Because of poverty, I had limited access to art other than what I saw in books, what I made, and what I drew. I learnt quickly you didn't need money to have a creative mind and creative outcomes.

Art allowed a journey of self-discovery and adventure, and at the age of 19 with limited funds, I left New Zealand to arrive in Australia. With no support and not one cent from anyone, I began educating myself in the arts. The contrast of art accessibility between country and city was astounding, and to this day, poverty and remote living have left a significant impression, that has formed the basis of my talk, and my pursuit for community arts in remote regions of Victoria.

Evidence tells us that

- 1 in 10 professional artists live in rural, remote or very remote areas
- 7 in 10 people in regional Australia believed the arts had a 'big' or 'very big' impact on stimulating their minds
- Regional based artists have increasingly negative perceptions about the impact of their location on their practice¹.

There was this one time I went to a remote Victorian town that is known as a low socio-economic centre with major issues surrounding youth and adult unemployment. I noticed an art framing shop that called itself an art gallery. The artworks in the gallery were one of the worst collections I had ever seen, and I wondered how the locals reacted to this demonstration of rural arts in the representation of their town. My experiences of growing up with limited access to art hit me like a ton of bricks. I decided that more impoverished remote communities should have access to an art gallery, and art training opportunities, to enable people that don't have much, to come together, to create much more, including a pride of place and self.

Today, I want to talk to you about how you can help me support the remote arts, that I have initiated in Ballarat with my house to gallery conversion to become the first community art gallery and the first operational business model. The long-term endeavour is to open the first gallery, then another, and then another, with the long-term vision to assemble a network of galleries to create a circuit to tour exhibitions, while at the same time providing art opportunities and training for remote Victoria. I call it five-on-five; five ingredients for promotion, five formulas of the process, and five ways you can help.

Here are the five elements for development

1. Promote the arts as the cultural power of place

¹ Australian Government, Australian Council for the Arts, n.d., *The Arts in Regional Australia: A Research Summary*, 29 November 2017, <http://www.australiacouncil.gov.au/research/regional-arts-summary/>

2. Promote interaction in public art activities
3. Engage youth and adult into a productive arts community
4. Increase participation through art celebrations
5. Broaden arts participation by extending to nearby towns.

These five ingredients are a simple strategic plan for a gallery to promote a remote town as a cultural destination and become competitive in a national arts economy.

The five-step formula of process

1. Acquire funds
2. Purchase and build
3. Open and operate
4. Develop and measure
5. Repeat.

Lastly, here's how you can help

1. Donate money to material trade packages, like tiles to the wet areas, weatherboards to the front of the house, plants for landscaping
2. Donate money to trade services like electricals and plumbing
3. Donate your skill; if you are a registered tradesperson, provides some of your time to help us build
4. Donate money towards the cost of a regional house
5. Donate money to the Australian Cultural Fund as little or as much as you like and receive a tax exemption at tax time.

Contributing is a great way to be involved in a remote community and a spectacular way to say, I did something that mattered, I helped others, I did something with purpose and meaning, and I left a legacy in this town for now, and for future generations.