

REGIONAL ARTS FUNDING

Grievance

MR D.T. PUNCH (Bunbury) [9.54 am]: My grievance is to the Minister for Culture and the Arts and concerns the McGowan government's investment and commitment to regional arts funding. I use the term regional arts quite broadly. We know now, of course, that the arts cover a vast array of different mediums—too many for me to mention in the time allocated. My electorate of Bunbury is relatively small in geographic terms, covering some 60 square kilometres, but it has one of the larger regional populations with a strong multicultural flavour. It sits at the head of the south west economy, which has a gross regional product estimated at over \$15 billion, based on agriculture, manufacturing, tourism, resource processing, human services and the creative industries. It is a shining light for our region and for the state and hosts the region's port, which has grown every year in total freight handled, and is central to a large industrial land resource capable of supporting the opportunities I have described.

The community will grow, and culture and arts need to grow with it. Bunbury has a thriving culture and arts community and we punch well above our weight. We have an extensive program of the region's talented performers based in Bunbury and it speaks volumes about and is testament to the capacity and continued growth of Bunbury and the region. My community is home to an outstanding performing arts centre in the Bunbury Regional Entertainment Centre, an A-class art gallery and a community arts centre that facilitates the ongoing practice of heritage craft and disciplines. As a centre for a wide range of peak regional arts organisations, no doubt Bunbury has the creative infrastructure necessary to advance the creative industries in my community and the region. The investment into the activities of the sector is necessary for us to capitalise on that infrastructure. The benefits of the arts and cultural experiences to our communities are extensive and should not be underestimated in our diverse state. They make an important contribution to social cohesion, sense of identity, and health and wellbeing, and extend to tourism and other economic development opportunities.

There are many examples of individual artists and touring productions in Bunbury funded through the culture and the arts WA grants program. Investment into arts and cultural services in regional WA is needed to build regional liveability and prosperity. The provision of arts and cultural services to regional WA creates accessibility for communities to arts and cultural experiences, thereby supporting communities to be healthy and well connected. The arts and cultural sector also offers a range of employment opportunities and increases economic activity through supporting industries such as the hospitality sector. There were 95 660 creative industry jobs in regional Australia in 2016, which increased by 21 per cent from 2011 to 2016. This is a growth sector and investment is vital to see it reach its potential. I know that the statistics for creative industries in the south west are equally impressive.

I am aware that some regional funding is coming to an end and I am concerned that if we do not move now to ensure that the funding opportunities are continued, many of my region's local artists and performers may have to move elsewhere or close their doors. I am aware that the McGowan government values regional arts and cultural organisations and recognises the valuable contribution they make to regional Western Australia. A strong cultural and arts program is crucial to regional communities. Opportunities for our young people to see, hear and participate in these activities are vital for their education and wellbeing. There is a great network of youth-related activities in culture and the arts.

The state government has made a significant investment in promoting the beautiful south west region of our state and many feature films are now making the most of this amazing backdrop. The important link between the funding of culture and the arts and tourism cannot be underestimated. I recently attended the twelfth CinefestOZ awards night in Busselton and Bunbury. The festival's \$100 000 Film Prize, Australia's largest prize, had two WA films in competition, *GO!* and *H is for Happiness*, with *H is for Happiness* winning the prize. I understand the regional exhibition touring boost is delivering new visual arts exhibition touring to regional WA galleries in 2020 as part of the \$8 million regional exhibition touring boost election commitment to connect regional audiences with the state's art collection. This government's commitment to the regional exhibition touring boost is providing fantastic opportunities for regional audiences to engage with artworks from the Art Gallery of Western Australia collection.

If a funding program is not implemented, the cessation of the delivery of arts and cultural services in the regions will mean that the increased level of arts and cultural activities available for regional communities will decrease and regional audiences and markets that have been developed will be lost. This would have a negative impact on the growing regional arts economies, employment and skills development in the creative sector. Back in 2010, we analysed the creative sector in my region. The analysis showed that it contributed around \$360 million to the gross regional product and \$75 million to exports, and employed over 1 000 people. At that time it was growing at an estimated rate of three per cent. It was a very significant sector for our region. The positive effects on health, education, and social cohesion of communities engaging with the arts would also be lost, reducing the quality of life for regional people. Again, the benefit of culture and the arts cannot be underestimated. It promotes inclusion,

vibrancy and a healthy local community. Could the minister please outline any funding opportunities that may be available to support the regions going forward? Thank you, minister.

MR D.A. TEMPLEMAN (Mandurah — Minister for Culture and the Arts) [10.00 am]: I thank the member for Bunbury. I am very pleased to respond to his grievance.

First of all, I acknowledge the member for Bunbury's strong support and understanding of the value of our creative industries to a modern economy and a future broadening of our economy, and the role that culture and the arts plays in telling the story of who we are. The member mentioned that it delivers a whole range of benefits to the community, individuals and organisations through participation and connectivity. I agree with the member totally. The member represents Western Australia's second largest regional city, behind the City of Mandurah, which remains of the largest regional city in Western Australia. I know that he represents his regional city proudly. I want to congratulate Bunbury and other communities of the south west, which, in many respects, continue to lead the way in the development and support of creative industries in Western Australia. The member mentioned the CinefestOZ Film Festival, which, as the member is aware, is one of many examples. The south west, and Bunbury, is home to an increasing number of people involved right across the spectrum of creative industries, be they musicians, performers, writers, artists, or people involved in graphic design—AV, UV and all the other Vs! The south west is a hive of activity. The member's plea to this government to continue and, indeed, enhance funding to the arts is well heard. I am very proud and pleased that one component of a number of initiatives was committed to in the state budget through the regional arts and cultural investment program, which will deliver \$20 million to regional Western Australia over the next four years through three key streams. I will go through them because I want to highlight the opportunities for the member's region because he has asked what funding is available, how it can be accessed, and the priorities and objectives.

Stream 1 of the \$20 million is \$11.3 million over four years for regional venues. The member's electorate has a magnificent venue in the Bunbury Regional Entertainment Centre. I have been to shows there on a number of occasions. The regional venues fund under stream 1, "a state of creativity", focuses on delivering \$9.3 million to a venue activation fund and \$2 million for business development capacity building. That will support the development and sustainability of creative industries. It is really important that we support the sustainability and development of creative industries in Western Australia because they need that to ensure that they get start-ups. There are many great examples of start-ups, but they need stability and sustainability in order to have time to succeed. As the member highlighted, investing in creative industries creates jobs and makes sure that there is a leverage effect. As the member knows, the arts is a very good and outstanding example in which one dollar invested levers many other dollars of investment. We can see that in the regional film fund, which the member highlighted as well. That fund allows leverage that gets films, documentaries and series off the ground so that they can be filmed in regional Western Australia. In his grievance the member highlighted a number of examples of some magnificent films, documentaries and a series that have been produced and filmed in regional Western Australia, including in the south west. The member mentioned two films that were CinefestOZ finalists. They were *H is for Happiness*, which is a magnificent film—members with a family or kids should take them to see that film because it is a remarkable and beautiful story—and *GO!*, which was filmed in and around Busselton in the south west.

The second stream is also really important. It is called "strengthening Aboriginal arts". It is a \$2.46 million investment specifically supporting Aboriginal arts and cultural centres around the state. It is very important because we want to enhance the capacity of Aboriginal arts and cultural centres to not only support Indigenous artists and their work, but also make sure that they get the remuneration they deserve as artists. There is a big investment in that through this fund. There is also a commissioning fund of \$1.8 million, which will ensure that we understand the development of our Indigenous artists in Western Australia and, indeed, their value in selling our state to the rest of the world. The member mentioned tourism. Tourists want to not only see great landscapes, which Western Australia has plenty of, but also learn the stories of the people who make this place. The member also mentioned the multicultural make-up of Western Australia.

The third stream is "empowering and employed communities". It is a \$5 million commitment that looks at leveraging creative and cultural planning, regional arts empowerment and employment grants, and a community participation and inclusion grant program. These will all be available to the member's community. The regional and remote festivals fund supports small and not-so-small festivals that do fantastic stuff in Western Australia. Finally, I could go on, but I want to mention two programs that opened recently—that is, the regional and remote festivals fund and Playing WA. I will give the member some more information about these. These two funds are open now. They are significant investments that target regional communities. The first will support regional and remote festivals. Playing WA will focus on delivering content productions into regional Western Australia. Well done, member for Bunbury. He gets it. He understands culture and the arts. I know he does and he is a fantastic member of this place and represents his community brilliantly.