

**COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT AND JUSTICE
STANDING COMMITTEE**

INQUIRY INTO THE ARTS IN REGIONAL WESTERN AUSTRALIA

**TRANSCRIPT OF EVIDENCE TAKEN
AT BROOME
ON MONDAY, 1 SEPTEMBER 2003**

SESSION 5

Members

**Mr D.A. Templeman (Chairman)
Mr L. Graham (Deputy Chairman)
Mr J.N. Hyde
Mr A.P. O’Gorman
Ms S.E. Walker**

[1.28 pm]

HART, MS KIM

Chairperson, Kimberley Performing Arts Council Inc,

Board Member, Country Arts WA,

examined:

The CHAIRMAN: Welcome, Kim. This is a formal hearing of the Community Development and Justice Standing Committee, which is currently conducting an inquiry into the arts in regional Western Australia. I am sure you have received a copy of our terms of reference.

Ms Hart: I did.

The CHAIRMAN: We are looking at a range of aspects of arts as they effect regional communities. Thank you very much for appearing before us this afternoon. We have about 35 minutes. Firstly, the committee hearing is a proceeding of Parliament and warrants the same respect that proceedings in the House itself demand. Even though you are not required to give evidence on oath, any deliberate misleading of the committee may be regarded as contempt of Parliament. Have you completed the "Details of Witness" form?

Ms Hart: Yes, I have.

The CHAIRMAN: Do you understand the notes attached to it?

Ms Hart: Yes, I do.

The CHAIRMAN: Did you receive and read an information for witnesses briefing sheet regarding giving evidence before parliamentary committees?

Ms Hart: Yes.

The CHAIRMAN: Our terms of reference relate to arts in regional WA, and our focus is the economic, cultural and social impact of the arts in regional communities. The five key elements to which we are paying attention are the benefits of the arts to regional WA; the level of local content in the arts; employment generation relating to the arts; the impact of government funding; and the effectiveness of arts festivals. As you are representing the Kimberley Performing Arts Council, can you give a brief overview of the council's role? That will lead us to a series of questions relating to our terms of reference.

Ms Hart: The council started probably about eight or nine years ago as a voluntary group that came together to bring performing arts to Broome. It still does that. We handle most of the shows on the go and touring events of Country Arts WA. We put on eight to 10 performances a year, six or seven of which are from the Country Arts touring menu, and other people approach us to do individual shows. The committee comprises 10 people, including me. We have an annual general meeting in October or November, which usual results in a bit of a change. I have been the chairperson for three years. We are all volunteers. Basically, we are interesting in bringing things to Broome.

The CHAIRMAN: Does the council have individual membership? How does the membership aspect work?

Ms Hart: It works not very well. We have not got many members; we have the committee and half a dozen others, basically, because people cannot see any benefit in being a member. We put on shows and determine a ticket price. We have not been able to attract a reduction in ticket price for members. It was something we did in the first year that I was chairperson, but people were not really interested in it. We have membership and that is about it. Members receive a newsletter.

The CHAIRMAN: Is it correct that the Kimberley Performing Arts Council acts as entrepreneur for shows with funding from Country Arts in six out of 10 productions a year?

Ms Hart: Yes.

The CHAIRMAN: Are you associated with any community-based theatre companies existing in Broome?

Ms Hart: There is none with us. I do not know why we are called the Kimberley Performing Arts Council - you might!

Mr J.N. HYDE: I had better declare myself as one of the original members of the council. At the stage we formed it, you could not get funding through PATIO - the Performing Arts Touring Information Office - Country Arts predecessor, or the Government unless one had a performing arts venue or council, like the Western Australian Performing Arts Council. The lucky people in Hedland and Mandurah with centres received \$20 000 a year, but we could not access the structure in Broome. By setting up the structure with the council, even though we did not have a venue, we were entitled to the money.

Ms Hart: I believe it was because there are two different types of funding with Country Arts. It is either shows on the go or those that have venues that get tailored, added performers. There is a conference being held at the end of the month. I should remember its title, I am sorry. Not having a venue, we are a little limited in what we are offered through Country Arts.

The CHAIRMAN: So the shows that you entrepreneur are held at the Broome Civic Centre?

Ms Hart: No, we are very reluctant to use the civic centre.

The CHAIRMAN: What is the main venue you use?

Ms Hart: We put them on all around town. We have a number of sponsors, such as the Mangrove Hotel. The Cable Beach Club Resort has only just come on this year as a sponsor. Moonlight Bay is a sponsor. We tend to put them on where people are sponsors and whatever suits the show. We have the Comedy Company here at the club on Thursday night. We do not have a theatre in Broome or any venue that is suitable for small theatre. We struggle with that, and we tend not to do plays. However, it is not so much the case with the Comedy Company. We have another show in the following week which is a show on the go for which we took reserve seating only. I have struggled with that one and it is being held at the Gimme Gimme Bar at the moment.

The CHAIRMAN: What you choose to take from the Country Arts menu is very much restricted by where you can accommodate the show in terms of a venue.

Ms Hart: Yes. We get the touring book every year. We have to apply to the touring book this year by 23 September. In the time that I have been involved with the Kimberley Performing Arts Council and Country Arts, they have improved considerably in getting information out to us. Before, we did not know what was available because the touring book was not out until January. They have it out now and we must reply. There is a whole book on offer. All the places involved, including the Walkington Theatre, or anywhere that deals with Country Arts, can apply for the shows they would like, and Country Arts votes on what

shows can travel. Presumably, they are subsidised by Country Arts. We still pay a performance fee.

Mr J.N. HYDE: Would it be fair to say that because of the Country Arts menu, and the situation in Broome, it is primarily the case that you end up doing the shows in partnership with commercial venues?

Ms Hart: Definitely. We do ballet every year, and we put that on in the amphitheatre down here. The shire owns that land. We have always been given a 50 per cent reduction of the hire of that venue - never 100 per cent. However, we could put something on the Mangrove Hotel or Moonlight Bay, at which we do not pay any venue hire; however, it is seen from the places that it is a part of the sponsorship.

Mr J.N. HYDE: Those commercial ones and the Country Arts menu ones are usual \$1 000 or \$1 800.

Ms Hart: They are getting quite expensive now. We did *Simply Sinatra* this year, and it was nearly \$3 000 or \$3 500.

Mr J.N. HYDE: How many performers were involved?

Ms Hart: There were 10 in that one. It was like a mini-big band. It was a tribute to Sinatra and James Flynn.

Mr J.N. HYDE: These commercial venues, as well as getting the subsidised products through Country Arts and your own works, are they also having commercial acts themselves?

Ms Hart: The Mangrove Hotel does; Moonlight Bay does not. The commercial venues get the bar, basically. We apply for a licence for all our performances, and we offer food nine times out of time. We are not offering food this Thursday and with the plays because they go for only about an hour and a half. However, 90 per cent of the time we offer food in the licensed bar in the venues.

Mr J.N. HYDE: The ballet is probably the big success of KPAC. I do not know whether you have the exact figures, but my understanding is that the Government through ArtsWA or Country Arts may have subsidised the ballet by \$25 000 or \$50 000 and KPAC raised about \$25 000.

Ms Hart: I am not sure what government gives to the Western Australian Ballet. I know that not this year but last year, Tom Stephens' office put in \$80 000 or something.

Mr J.N. HYDE: That was through the Western Australian regional investment scheme funding.

Ms Hart: Yes. It caused some confusion with patrons because they read in the paper that the office of Tom Stephens, or whatever, was giving \$80 000 for the ballet, and people wondered why we charged for tickets. They did not understand the concept of it all. We had to pay that year \$20 000 for the ballet. Yes, we set a ticket price at \$35, and we lost money on it. If we have a high ticket price, we do not get people attending. This year we said we would not take the ballet again at that price because it was too hard for us.

Ms S.E. WALKER: How much did the ballet charge you for having it here?

Ms Hart: Last year it was \$20 000, and this year it was \$10 000. I said that we were not going to do it again.

Ms S.E. WALKER: It was \$20 000.

Ms Hart: It was \$10 000 this year and \$20 000 the year before. However, I would not do it for \$20 000 this year because it was just too hard.

Ms S.E. WALKER: What did you charge this year?

Ms Hart: It was \$30 a ticket.

Ms S.E. WALKER: Do people come for \$30, but not \$35?

Ms Hart: We still had a good roll-up for \$35 a ticket. Any ticket price in country areas that is higher than \$35 a ticket, you just do not get the attendance. Ballet does not appeal to everyone, but it does if people can come and sit on the lawn, which is typically what happens. They watch it. We struggled too much. We lost probably \$6 000 -

Ms S.E. WALKER: This year?

Ms Hart: Last year. That is why I said we would not do it. The ballet then turned around and got a corporate sponsor for \$10 000, I think it was.

Mr A.P. O'GORMAN: How do you cover that \$6 000 cost if you are all volunteers?

[1.45 pm]

Ms Hart: Basically, with our Lotterywest funding, we cannot get funding for performance fees. However, we can get funding for the hire of equipment, venues and things like that, and for the administration costs of putting it all together. Even though we do not pay anyone, we put in our volunteer hours and that is where we make up the \$6 000. We make money on some shows. We might make \$1 000 on *Simply Sinatra*, for example, and we might make \$1 000 on another show, so that money goes into the kitty. If we lose money, it comes out of the kitty. It is pretty simple. The infrastructure to put on the ballet here is enormous. It costs us about \$5 000 or \$6 000.

The CHAIRMAN: When you get a show up, does it create any local employment to put on the show? Obviously, there are tourism spin-offs.

Ms Hart: The only local employment would be for Troppo Sound, which we use. That is basically it.

Mr J.N. HYDE: Does Troppo Sound do the stage? For example, would the ballet bring its own stage?

Ms Hart: The ballet brings its own stage. I have to hire generators, toilets and everything else for them.

Mr J.N. HYDE: Does that come out of your \$20 000 or is that on top?

Ms Hart: No, that is on top.

Ms S.E. WALKER: That is the \$10 000.

Mr J.N. HYDE: It was \$10 000 this year.

Ms Hart: Yes, it was \$10 000 this year. That is on top.

Ms S.E. WALKER: What does that cost?

Ms Hart: Around \$5 000 by the time we set it up. We needed to supply toilets for 1 000 people and for the ballet troupe's area. They also need tents for change rooms, tables and chairs. By the time we hire three or four generators to run the food and the bar, lights, toilets, and a generator to run the ballet, it costs quite a bit of money.

Ms S.E. WALKER: It is a lot of work as a volunteer to just bring culture to the area.

Ms Hart: It is huge. If I were not in the position that I am in now - as a business owner I am able to put in volunteer hours - I do not think it would happen.

Ms S.E. WALKER: How much funding do you get from Lotterywest?

Ms Hart: This year we have applied for \$14 000. Last year we got \$16 000.

The CHAIRMAN: Is that for the administration of the organisation?

Ms Hart: Yes and no. We get it to subsidise performance fees so that we can keep ticket prices down. We are a not-for-profit organisation so we try to keep ticket prices as low as we can. We put on children's shows for nothing. We put on the National Youth Choir of Great Britain at the start of Shinju Matsuri and 2 500 people came because it was a free concert. That cost us about \$5 000. That is what we do with it. We have had a reasonably good year so we decided to give something back to the community. We put on the concert for free.

The CHAIRMAN: Does the wider community understand the importance of what you are doing?

Ms Hart: One of the reasons we presented the free concert with the choir was to raise community awareness.

The CHAIRMAN: So it was bannered as "The Kimberley Performing Arts Council presents"?

Ms Hart: Yes. That was a huge thing because there were 100 youth who were on a tour from the United Kingdom. They tour every four years. They went to Samoa, Singapore, New Zealand and up the Western Australian coast. Unfortunately, something happened to prevent them from performing in Perth, which was really disappointing. I think that the organisation that would have taken them on in Perth folded. We had 100 kids to billet. That was massive.

The CHAIRMAN: Did you coordinate that as a volunteer organisation?

Ms Hart: Yes.

The CHAIRMAN: What is the interface between your organisation and the Shinju festival?

Ms Hart: Nothing at all. I talked to Adele Dixon regarding when other things were on. We knew that the choir was coming during Shinju time, so I spoke to them about having it included in the Shinju program, but that was all.

The CHAIRMAN: Was it in the program?

Ms Hart: It was in the program. The Shinju festival did not contribute anything to the choir and we do not contribute anything to Shinju. They run it as a separate organisation.

Mr J.N. HYDE: It sounds like you are still adapting the system to your needs in terms of Lotterywest or Gordon Reid funding or whatever it is. There are other sources of government funding such as ArtsWA and Country Arts WA. Have you thought about the system? How can we change the system to make it easier for volunteers and your group?

Ms Hart: One of the biggest things that Broome is lacking is an events coordinator. Too many things are on in Broome during the peak time. They overlap and nobody knows what is happening. Originally we were going to have the choir at Moonlight Bay and have it as a ticketed performance, but the Bee Gees were on at The Mangrove Hotel. That is right next door, so no-one would have been able to hear any of it. That was another reason we ended up putting it on down here as a free concert. I think the shire had an events coordinator at some stage. I do not know who was employed in that position.

Mr J.N. HYDE: Clare Chang.

Ms Hart: I do not know whether she was the right or the wrong person for the job or whether it just never worked out. There seems to be a bit of them and us. A new organisation was formed this year called the Broome Arts and Music Foundation. Again, it was formed to promote local people such as the Pigram Brothers and all those sorts of people. The agenda

of that organisation is to promote and put on local people. They coordinated the Broome Music and Arts Festival over Easter. I spoke to Gary quite a few times regarding what they were putting on and it was supposed to be the local musicians, arts and everything. He wanted us to pay for a particular local performer or performers on one night, but that was not really on our agenda. We bring people in from out of town; they are promoting local people. We could not afford it because they wanted us to give them about \$5 000 or \$6 000.

Ms S.E. WALKER: For what?

Ms Hart: And not get the ticket price for it.

The CHAIRMAN: So they really wanted you more as a sponsor.

Ms Hart: Yes.

Ms S.E. WALKER: What do you think of BAMF?

Ms Hart: To tell you the truth, I think it is an organisation that was formed by a lot of people in town who have good intentions and who have run with it because it might work. They have annoyed quite a few people in town who are in the arts because they have a paid coordinator who is quite pushy and they were not really seen to be really doing anything. They took on the local organisation of Perth International Arts Festival events, and Adele Dixon helped out as well. It seemed to be fine - PIAF seemed quite happy. A few comments were made to me about them not supplying food to lots of the venues. That is a bit of a local thing because the Kimberley Performing Arts Council does do that and it is a bit of an expectation of what should be provided. Sometimes people do not really know who is putting on what. A paid coordinator would be very good.

Ms S.E. WALKER: Have you used any of your funding? What is the total funding that you receive each year?

Ms Hart: We apply every year for different amounts. Basically we apply for around \$14 000.

Ms S.E. WALKER: When I asked about Lotterywest funding, you said it was about \$14 000 or \$16 000. The member for Perth made a comment about other funding.

Ms Hart: We do not get any organisational funding other than from Lotterywest.

Ms S.E. WALKER: I wondered why you did not put on somebody part-time, but I can now see why.

Mr J.N. HYDE: It is through the ticket prices, and obviously Country Arts WA is a subsidised fee.

Ms Hart: The normal performance fee for shows might be about \$6 000, but as a Country Arts WA member we would pay \$3 000. That is an example. They try to give a discounted performance fee. We still have to pay for the shows.

Mr J.N. HYDE: Are you a board member of Country Arts WA or the representative for this area?

Ms Hart: Yes.

Mr J.N. HYDE: What is your honest view of how it operates?

Ms Hart: From what I have seen so far, I believe it operates well. As I said, three or four years ago when I got involved with the Kimberley Performing Arts Council, Country Arts WA was a bit tardy - it was late with everything. There was no communication. We did not seem to get enough information. Performers would turn up in town and we would not have

been told that they were not touring with gear. It just made life a bit difficult. Country Arts WA is good now. It is being run really well.

Mr J.N. HYDE: In terms of local knowledge, the situation of people turning up without any gear can happen with commercial groups as well. Instead of funding a touring body centrally, which I guess is the Country Arts WA model, New South Wales seems to have devolved this to 13 regions. Each region is given a pot of money and looks after touring, or they get all that money and choose shows themselves on a region basis.

Ms Hart: From where do they choose the shows? There must be some central body that people actually -

Mr J.N. HYDE: The Australia Council, arts bodies, Art on the Move and all of that.

Ms Hart: It might work. I do not know. I cannot comment. As far as I am concerned, Country Arts WA works okay. I cannot say that I know a lot about touring in other States. I am on the touring arts subsidy board. When people apply for funding to Country Arts WA, they also apply for share the risk funding. However, the Kimberley Performing Arts Council has never applied for any of that. If we cannot put on a show, we cannot cover our costs. With whatever funding that we get, we probably do not need to do it. We put on some children's shows for free, but we ask for a gold coin donation.

[1.55 pm]

The CHAIRMAN: A number of the presentations we have heard while we have been here in Broome, have raised the issue of youth and young people at risk etc. I am very surprised; I was not aware that there was no theatrical group as such.

Ms Hart: There used to be. It was called Theatre Kimberley.

Mr J.N. HYDE: I declare an interest. That was my company.

Ms Hart: I think Gwen Knox had something to do with it as well. I have not heard anything of it for years.

Mr J.N. HYDE: We lost a million dollars in federal funding, and the youth suffered. Derby, Broome and Wyndham are all gone.

Ms Hart: Peter Bibby was under the auspices of KPAC when they were auditioning for a play. He felt that local children were not getting an advantage over city kids who had been able to access theatre training and all of that type of thing. So he applied for funding through us, so he could give workshops for kids who were auditioning for local things like *Ocean Star* and a couple of the others that are in town. I believe that Barking Gecko is doing one up here next year, or trying to.

Mr J.N. HYDE: Was the arrangement with Peter Bibby a short-term artist-in-residence, under the short-term artist in residence program?

Ms Hart: Yes.

Mr J.N. HYDE: So you are the coordinating body that has to apply for that funding?

Ms Hart: Yes; we were the auspicing body. Is that how it is said - an auspicious body?

Mr J.N. HYDE: The sponsor?

Ms Hart: Yes.

Mr J.N. HYDE: Is STAR handled through Country Arts, or through the department, ArtsWA?

Ms Hart: ArtsWA.

Mr J.N. HYDE: In terms of your dealing with ArtsWA, I understand they have a regional person.

Ms Hart: Yes, I met him the other day.

Mr J.N. HYDE: The other day?

Ms Hart: Yes.

Mr J.N. HYDE: It is rather interesting. We have discovered as we have gone through the Kimberley, that this new person in the position somehow turned up the day before we arrived

Ms Hart: Yes. I think everyone was in town for Shinju. If they intend to come, they should be here at that time, because it is a festival, and it is a major event for Broome.

The CHAIRMAN: Can I ask a question about Shinju, and your opinion of that festival? One of our terms of reference relates to the effectiveness of arts festivals. What is your feeling about Shinju now?

Ms Hart: I think it was good this year. I have only been in Broome for nine years. The first couple of years it was okay. It has had its ups and downs. They struggle heaps with getting people on the committee, and getting some sort of funding to pay a coordinator. I think this year they have done reasonably well, considering that there is a lot of negativity about it, that it has had it, or it has not. I think it was quite good. I did not go to all of the things that were on, but I heard that they were well supported and it was fine. Broome needs it. It is really the only festival that we can lay claim to, and it has been on the calendar for a lot of years. There are a lot of caravaners and people like that who tend to stay around in Broome for it, because a lot of the events are free. I think this year they did quite well.

Mr J.N. HYDE: You are also a business owner here, and part of what we are looking at is the economic impact of the arts in regional Western Australia. Would you be able to give us a view of how much value you think the arts add?

Ms Hart: Definitely. I was involved in talks for when the Perth International Arts Festival has the extension of the Perth festival up here in February. I was involved, and gave a lot of support to it to come and try it out, and have it. I was approached to be the local coordinator, but I cannot do it, but I was in favour of it, and helped it. I am in the tourism industry, and as far as I was concerned, we need more things happening in our shoulder season. Everybody comes to Broome at this time of the year, because the weather is nice and there are lots of things on. The tourism body is looking at extending the seasons out a bit, and encouraging people to come for longer, and either earlier or later into October and November. That supports the town a lot more, and if there are things for people to do and go to it is added value for us. One of the reasons I ended up taking the chair of KPAC, because it was going to fold. The people of Broome need it, and tourism needs an organisation to bring it to town.

Mr J.N. HYDE: As the chairperson of KPAC, and as a business person, are you happy to leave it to other people to develop local talent, and so on, but KPAC just wants to specialise in bringing outside products in?

Ms Hart: Yes; I am quite happy to take shows through Country Arts, and other programs. We are having Don Burrows and Kevin Hunt on the eighteenth of this month. That is not a Country Arts thing; that is something we just took on ourselves. We were approached. I am getting asked more and more to put shows on, but with limited resources, we do not pay anyone, and it is really hard with voluntary time. We have got quite a few good ones coming next year.

The CHAIRMAN: Do you plan a year ahead, once you have the program?

Ms Hart: Yes. Once Country Arts gives us our program, and people have approached us already. I have David Helfgott and Jane Rutter in September, and another pianist in May. We usually get, somewhere along the line, Musica Viva, through Playing Australia funding, who do their tour. That is usually the kick-off of our year, which is about March or April. I have three booked in already, and then we will probably have six done by Country Arts. I will probably pick up a couple during the year next year.

The CHAIRMAN: Do members have any further questions?

Kim, we have come to the end, and we are on time. Can I thank you on behalf of the committee for your contribution this afternoon. A copy of the transcript will be made available to you so that you can have a read through, and if there are glaring mistakes - not that our Hansard reporters ever do that - you will be most welcome to make comments or corrections.

Ms Hart: I will make a comment on the money allocated to the performing arts centre. I was not involved in the committee right at the beginning, but I did go to quite a number of meetings of the arts advisory committee from KPAC. I found it very frustrating. I know it is probably policy, but a lot of consultation was done that I think was not necessary. Everybody in the arts in Broome has their own agenda of what they want and what they saw for the performing arts centre. Some of them wanted a huge great centre with a capacity of about 800. Cost-wise, as a business person I could see that no-one would hire it because they could not afford to pay to turn on the air-conditioning for a start. I think a smaller venue would be better, probably up to 350 people, where you only have to have one manager who is also the lighting person, instead of having a manager and a lighting person, and all that goes with a bigger venue. I spoke with the guy from ArtsWA, who was up here on the weekend. I have forgotten his name. I was saying we need a little bit more infrastructure around town, such as power at the amphitheatre, and probably toilets there, and some sort of portable stage that can be put up there where we utilise the Broome ambience. People who come to Broome, and locals, prefer to sit outside and watch a performance and have it as casual as possible. That is why I commented that we never put anything on at the civic centre. For one thing, it is a horrible building, the acoustics are bad, and it is atrocious. It is a disgrace, actually. I have never put anything on there in the three years I have been involved.

Mr J.N. HYDE: I think the original plan was for \$5 million for a small performing arts place like that, but as government and the community demands consultation these days, we will probably end up with that, but the process is unbelievable. Do you still have a close relationship with the shire? Greg Powell used to be on KPAC.

Ms Hart: His wife is our treasurer.

Mr J.N. HYDE: Great.

Ms Hart: We do have relationship with the shire. I believe that Western Power and the shire are looking at doing a joint thing to put power at the amphitheatre, hopefully by early next year.

Mr J.N. HYDE: I thought there was already three-phase put down.

Ms Hart: That belongs to the club, and you have to pay for it, but there is not enough. It is right in the middle, and there is not enough to run a performance there at all.

The CHAIRMAN: Thank you very much, and we wish you and the Kimberley Performing Arts Council the very best for the future, and with the shows you have entrepreneur through Country Arts and other funding bodies throughout the year. Thank you for attending.

Committee adjourned at 2.10 pm

