

## CREATIVE INDUSTRIES

*The following article, written by Cathy Hunt, appeared under the title of Creative Consulting in The Creative Industries Edition of Artworkers Alliance's Summer 2005 newsletter.*

Positive Solutions has been engaged in the development of the "Creative Industries" for the past 15 years initially in the UK, and more recently in Australia and South East Asia. We recognise the creative industries as all those industries that have their origin in individual creativity, skill and talent. As well as commercial businesses, this includes sole traders and businesses constituted as 'not for profit' companies, which on top of their income generating activities, create cultural experiences and creative opportunities for the community, generating economic benefits through employment, image marketing and cultural tourism.

Our understanding of the creative industries, what they encompass and how the sector works, is very much influenced by our involvement in the research undertaken into the industry in Europe during the early 1990s. As well as assessing the economic importance and impacts of the industry, the research mapped the way the industry worked through gaining an understanding of its employees and the companies which employed them including motivations, training needs, markets and investment required.

This produced a holistic approach to defining the sector which recognised that:

- individuals working in this sector can be categorised as creators, technicians, educators and administrators which determines their training needs, employment opportunities and potential 'career paths'
- many individuals move freely between different parts of the 'creative economy' within the development of their own businesses, between creative disciplines, functions (as described above) or between the subsidised and purely commercial aspects of the industry
- the creative economy itself is a series of interlocking relationships between commercial and 'not for profit' elements of the industry, with the latter often providing the R&D component and new talent for the former; and
- as with other industries, there are some aspects of the sector which need forms of public sector investment or partnerships to create economic benefits. Such organisations were none the less recognised as part of the broader creative industry.

An important outcome of this early research and subsequent debate that followed focused around education and advocacy, both for those working in the sector and agencies involved in partnering and investing in creative enterprises. It was the first time that the importance of creativity, and the direct and indirect impacts to both the economy and the community at large had been articulated and quantified.

This led to a re-emergence of a broader debate about the importance of creativity in society as a whole, including issues such as:

- the need for art and creative practice within the education curriculum
- the importance of creative thinking and expression within all business practice
- the value add to many aspects of the economy from investment in art and creative and cultural activity; and

- the need to re-assess the way funding and investment decisions in the industry are made and implemented, including developing new mechanisms for support beyond the traditional grant making structures.

Most importantly it demonstrated at a macro level how little 'investment' as a whole went into the sector for the broader economic benefits it returned, and at a micro level revealed how few creative practitioners actually benefited from grants.

The benefits of this mapping to the creative community as a whole and in particular artists and artworkers, was to articulate the nature of the industry of which they were a part; how to measure their value and worth in the language everyone could understand; as well as identifying:

- the component parts of their professional practice
- the most appropriate delivery mechanisms for the training they required
- different market opportunities for their products and services
- partners in other disciplines, as well as investors and supporters who may share the same business and creative goals; and
- opportunities to put their skills and experience into practice, and make their businesses more sustainable.

For many artists and creative practitioners - this wasn't a new rhetoric or bureaucratic concept they now needed to engage with - it was the recognition that they had been fighting for all along.

The Queensland government should be applauded for taking the initiative it has in launching a Creative Industries Strategy. It is our hope that an holistic view of the creative industries will be embraced by all departments involved in its implementation, with a shared understanding of how the industry works and a vision for its future.