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To Whom it may Concern  
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To Whom it may Concern,

**RE: SUBMISSION TO NSW CREATIVE INDUSTRIES DRAFT INDUSTRY ACTION PLAN**

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Regional Development Australia – Northern Rivers (RDA – Northern Rivers) appreciates the opportunity to provide a submission to the *NSW Creative Industries Draft Industry Action Plan (IAP)*.

RDA–Northern Rivers is a non-profit community-based and regionally focused organisation that connects people and businesses in our region to opportunities through partnerships focusing on community, environment and economy. We have been established by the NSW and Australian Governments as a conduit to all governments, a voice for the region and a catalyst for regional collaboration and capacity building.

RDA–Northern Rivers is encouraged that the *Draft Creative Industries Draft IAP* includes an overview of the benefits of creative industries in economic, cultural and social value. Often the social and cultural benefits are not clearly valued and recognised and highlighting these benefits at the start of the plan indicates the importance of the full range of benefits provided by the creative industries to our community and social well being as well as economic development. Recommendations to further develop the data on these benefits are strongly supported. The sub-sector industry profiles are another useful data resource in the *Draft IAP*.

**NSW Government Leadership**

RDA–Northern Rivers supports the recommendations for NSW Government Leadership, particularly regarding advocacy with the Commonwealth Government. However, a central Ministerial/Departmental contact point within the NSW Government also needs to be supported with specific financial resources to ensure implementation of government leadership initiatives and to provide capacity for leadership to be integrated with industry representative groups.

**Brand and Communication**

Understandably most branding initiatives will focus on the promotion of Sydney, however, regional hot spots should be highlighted in branding and communication with appropriate target audiences to ensure continued capability development in regions and that the branding initiatives do not result



in a loss of regional capacity to Sydney.

### **Investment and Business Development**

The investment and business development recommendations are pivotal in further development of the diversity of the creative industries businesses. Action plans and budgets to highlight how these recommendations will be implemented is required in finalisation of the *Creative Industries IAP*. The development of complementary financing mechanisms through philanthropic investment and sponsorship such as occurs with Australian sport would be very beneficial to the creative industries.

RDA–Northern Rivers is strongly encouraged by the recognition of businesses in regional NSW (Recommendation 12) and the commitment of advisory assistance to businesses not currently captured by Enterprise Connect and the Creative Industries Innovation Centre Programs (Recommendation 13). Benchmarking data will also be incredibly valuable in assisting business growth and development and identifying how to improve productivity (Recommendation 14).

We are also particularly encouraged to see specific mention of the development of innovation hubs in regional centres, and that the Northern Rivers region has been identified as a potential location (Recommendation 17). This could be enhanced by the Creatives in Business program (Recommendation 19), and the Northern Rivers would strongly support a trial in this region. RDA–Northern Rivers and the Northern Rivers Creative Industries Consortium would support the NSW Government in implementing any regional initiatives.

Recent consultations conducted by RDA–Northern Rivers on the development of a Regional Digital Economy Strategy with the creative industries identified support to explore the feasibility and development of a model like the Melbourne Hub in the region (see <http://hubmelbourne.com/>). The Melbourne Hub is not specific to an industry sector and would enable trials such as the Creatives in Business to occur as well as cross-industry collaboration within the creative sectors. An additional benefit of the hub concept could be the provision of high speed broadband which is necessary for many businesses in the creative industries independent of the NBN timetable roll out, by being developed in association with a regional library or alternative regional facility/site (i.e. Recommendation 32).

RDA–Northern Rivers would be willing to assist with the NSW Government in establishing a creative industries related Cooperative Research Centre in collaboration with Southern Cross University and the Northern Rivers Creative Industries Consortium (recommendation 18).

In terms of improving market access, regional industry associations in the Northern Rivers region have had success with programs such as Screenworks Life's a Pitch, Arts Northern Rivers Speed Dating, the Creative Industries Brokers Project and Northern Rivers Writers Centre Mentorship Scheme. Further development and enhancement of these programs within the region is limited as these organisations all operate on limited budgets, but any mechanism to coordinate the further development of these initiatives with the *Creative Industries IAP* would be supported by the regional industry associations. The Draft Creative Industries IAP identifies opportunities for regional NSW businesses to drive export through high speed broadband, however in many regions the infrastructure is not yet in place to enable high speed broadband access.

### **Infrastructure**

It is encouraging that this section of the *Draft IAP* highlights the importance of peak industry bodies in the development of education and professional development for the creative industries. This section also notes a role for WiFi roll out to regional NSW libraries to improve access to high speed broadband, and it is recommended that a broader range of local facilities are provided with this access to high speed broadband to enable a wide range of opportunities for business access until the NBN roll out is fully implemented. Businesses without high speed broadband access, particularly in the creative industries and in regional NSW will continue to be disadvantaged by this disparity in the short term, in terms of both national and international competitiveness. This is a critical risk for regional creative industries business development.

### **Education and Training**

RDA–Northern Rivers is encouraged that the *Creative Industries Draft IAP* recognises the links between education, industry and business development and strongly supports the reinstatement of NSW Government funding to TAFE creative industries training and development. The development of creative careers could also be enhanced through mapping of career pathways with relevant training opportunities to highlight the diversity of job prospects and opportunities.

Businesses are more likely to engage with industry specific development and training opportunities than generic business development. Consequently, whilst the SmallBiz Connect program may provide business management skills, which are particularly important, industry take up will be limited unless program delivery is clearly targeted at the creative industries as a whole, or at sub-sectors within the creative industries.

### **Monitor and Review Performance**

RDA–Northern Rivers recommends that the final *Creative Industries IAP* includes a baseline measure for each of the measurement targets to assess performance over time. A measure of regional creative industries growth and development is also encouraged to ensure that growth in Sydney does not occur at the expense of regional capability.

### **Conclusion**

Thank you for the opportunity to contribute to the work of the *Creative Industries Draft IAP*. If you have any queries or inquiries regarding matters raised in this submission, please contact the CEO of RDA – Northern Rivers, Ms Katrina Luckie on 02 6622 4011.

Yours Sincerely,



Katrina Luckie

**CEO**