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**State of the Arts: Increasing cultural value and recognition of the arts through participatory practices. (A Case Study of the Arts in Warrnambool)**

**Presenter: Liza McCosh**

How artists gain exposure and operate across commercial platforms has in recent times, undergone great change in the global and local context. These changes are largely due to the upsurge in internet phenomena. Artists now have at their disposal a myriad of online possibilities to promote and sell their work. Consequently the effect on the commercial art sector has been largely realized through a downturn in gallery retail and the breakdown of the traditional artist/gallery relationship.

Concurrently, there is a growing appreciation by Governments and Council bodies for the value of the arts in a social and cultural context and as a benefit for the well-being of a community. This is evidenced through the formation and implementation of cultural policies across governing bodies both, national and local, that recognize the benefits of artists and forms of creativity within communities. As with all rapid change in discourse, issues surface; there is a space of renegotiation that needs to be addressed and in this context it is between artists, the broader local community and commercial enterprise beyond the existing arts community.

From the multiple perspectives of an artist, academic and arts manager, I will present a case study on the changing state of the arts in the regional city of Warrnambool, revealing issues and projected outcomes, and showing how these are being managed through a participatory model that includes artists, the local governing authority and commercial partnerships forged with the arts community. Initially inspired by Marcus Westbury’s Renew Newcastle and Renew Australia projects, the negotiation of the arts in Warrnambool is in a developmental stage, but is poised to confirm a model that supports the transformation of regional arts from an underground activity to one that is openly recognized, supported and valued within the community.

**EVALUATING RESILIENCE AND CHANGE IN COMMUNITY-BASED ART PRACTICES**

**Chair: Mary Ann Hunter**

**Panel members: Michelle LeBaron, and Lenine Bourke**

Arts practices are frequently used to foster community resilience and address cultural conflicts. Their versatility, dynamism and emergent nature make them attractive particularly for working with diverse groups. Yet, such practices are notoriously challenging to evaluate, both because there are no clear linear chains of causation and given different symbolic systems of meaning across cultures.

This panel brings together recent Canadian and Australian research and case-studies to investigate questions of value and evaluation in arts-based practice that seeks to build community resilience. In what ways are conventional log-frame approaches to evaluation being augmented or challenged by more recent approaches that incorporate dialogic, arts-based and neuroscientifically-informed approaches to measuring resiliency and change? In a world of diverse meaning-making, what do “measurement” or “change” mean anyway?