

January 10th, 2020.

To Whom It May Concern
Australia Council Arts Assessment Panel
Sydney, NSW

Dear Sir/ Madam

RE: Letter of Support for Regional Tour of "The House That Dan Built" to Gunnedah, NSW

I am writing with the privileged opportunity to offer a letter in support of a regional tour of workshops and performances that would contribute to the enhancement of their musical, literacy, and emotional resilience skills and development for the female children, adolescents and young adults of Gunnedah, New South Wales.

I work as a doctor in a General Practice clinic in Gunnedah, having moved with my young family from Brisbane in late 2017. One of my first impressions of this small town of approximately 10,000 was its interest in The Arts, where it is proud and thankful to its rich founding heritage in the written and spoken word thanks to Dorothea Mackellar, who spent time living in the region. The other impression is of its proud indigenous heritage, being the home to Gumbo Gunnerah, a legendary aboriginal elder and chief. We quickly felt welcomed in this town by comparison to many other rural, regional and metropolitan towns and cities in Queensland, Victoria and Western Australia that myself and my husband have lived in over the past (near) 20 years. Two legends and icons in Australia's culture that have stood the test of time to continue to provide insight and inspiration to the human condition.

My work has given me an insight into examples of some of the cosmopolitan troubles the young women of this town, and their elders face. Projects run by the company "The House that Dan Built" offers a structure and forum that target key areas of the development of young people to allow them to become empowered citizens of Australia, ultimately in preparation for education of the next generation. Workshops and performances provided by the Toy Choir, AKIN, and The long table target areas that include: literacy, numeracy (music is in part applied maths after all), communication (via group work and composition skills), emotional intelligence (the structure of the projects stem from key theories of music therapy and psychology, for example the girls are often asked to compose a novel text and music in response to a current social issue or theme usually with the goal of exploring and resolving internal or community struggle) and community strength through positive supported relationship development.

The Arts provide a medium that allows such education to be accessible in an age appropriate and culturally safe manner. As you know, it is the regimen of the practice of music and drama which allows a freedom of mind to allow fluidity of ideas and experimentation. That is, observers and participants have an expectation for these two pillars to co-exist and intertwine, allowing an evolution and resolution of ideas that are contained within the confines of a workshop or its performance.

All of the modern, and sometimes, age-old struggles faced by the community that enlist me as their doctor for advice, support often face heart sinking problems and cries for help of social inclusion and yearnings for supported development of the aforementioned skills. For example, I imagine sometimes what it would be like to be a part of the stolen generation and receive my first wage at my current age and experience because of my cultural identity, despite working from the age of 16, would my children have the same skills if I was restricted from secondary, tertiary and post graduate education? I see daily examples in my clinic of children and adolescents who's parents and grandparents have not had the privilege of completing their secondary education. Part of closing the gap in the sphere of health needs to be done outside of the clinic room. The forum provided by the well-researched platform within "The House that Dan Built" allows young women to explore some of these intergenerational experiences including development of language skills to express emotion. These young women will in turn help break the cycle of domestic violence by increasing their confidence in the experience of what their own emotion feels like, confidence in expressing this emotion, and confidence in advocating for their own advancement because they have a greater understanding of the role of their emotions to guide positive decisions.

I hope that I can give this experience to my community and develop new leaders for this sacred land that has developed leaders of Australia's past.

with kind regards
Amanda Kelly