

## THE PLACE OF SMALL-MEDIUM (S-M) SECTOR IN CULTURAL 'BIODIVERSITY'

notes developed from discussion at AD 2002

In explaining the place that the S-M Sector sees itself in the greater picture of the cultural environment of the Australian culture, we wish to draw on the metaphor of biodiversity, as a way to view one's connection into the larger picture.

As recognised by the report to the Ministers, this 'sector' is essential to the artistic vitality and ongoing development of Australia's performing arts, its main source of new works.

In recognising this we came up with the metaphor as a way of thinking about supporting the sector and seeing a way of providing a sustainable system. In simple terms, the forest needs its old growth, its understorey, its ground covers. The terminology of upward, downward, size etc is not indicative of value in this system.

Metaphoric terminology for this ecosystem.

**biodiversity**: (a diverse range of practice) In Ecological terms the cultural system needs a full gamut of biodiversity to exist in the first place and to renew and sustain itself. This is the range and flexibility of the working models. We recognise that the diversity of forms and practice is the fundamental strength of this sector.

**Species**: genetically different, keep their own integrity, reproduce. (**genotypes**) but interplay with each other, often in very subtle ways. Species often require very specific elements in order to exist. One species cannot serve the purpose of another. Some species like to be on mass, some are relatively unique.

**Biomass**: the sum total of the system, maybe measured in carbon units.

**Required energy**: measurable amounts and types required to keep the system healthy. There is a resource cost to sustaining the system. Much of this comes from within the system (large trees drop mass to create mulch etc. - can't you see the 'Major' Orgs handing over resources they don't need?) while some (ie sunlight and rain falls on all - can't you see the dollars dropping?) come from without. (Unless you globalise the system)

Resource hungry species should not determine the amount of resources others require, no species knows better what its requirements are except for that species. **Resource costs are not just dollars. In our case, they are largely human, ephemeral and need to be seen and treated differently**

**Life cycles and spans**: Individual plants have different life spans but even in an old tree falling, it provides cover and habitat for other species.

**Methods of reproduction**: (seeds etc, or the new ideas, memes, or THE FUTURE INVESTMENT TOWARDS CONTINUED SURVIVAL)

**Exhalation/conversion**: Carbon dioxide to oxygen. Social outcomes, while sometimes the core business, are often an exhalation.

If a species does not have enough resources, it will wither and die, this may be fast or slow.

Every element has its part to play. By hot-burning off the native grasses, you lose something that cannot be replaced, by flooding the system with new species you lose the basic integrity. Without the tall trees, the understories and ground cover cannot exist. A decimated ecosystem lacks beauty, strength, and ability to reproduce, to nurture new growth.

It is the interplay between the different species that gives the full life to the environment. We recognise the essential nature of diverse species and that the eradication of one species has a major effect on the entire system. As workers in the sector, we interact with each other through a sharing of ideas and processes. The integrity of the different species is important.

We do not yet know what new discoveries vital to our future existence may be found within this system. Some seeds that are planted now will not reach their maturity for many many years or centuries.

We recognise that careful management and nurturing is required. Too little too late and the system collapses. Introduction of weeds (things that do not belong in the system such as unnecessary admin etc) chokes the system, reducing its "capacity for creative innovation"

It is apparent that the resources necessary for the sustaining of this system are lacking. Also, that much seems to be choking it at the very level that it needs to be cared for.

The Artistic Directors' retreat has shown that a great deal of goodwill and cooperation exists between the forty representatives present (interspecies interactivity). That all practitioners feel secure in their arts practice (a strong sense of their species). However, through this week there is an even greater collective concern at the potential decline of the sector and the long-term effect of this on the entire system, the greater Australian Culture and its development and sustainability.

**Small footprints; touching the land lightly and leaving no mark.  
Well being, relationships and interrelationships, sustainability  
A covenant that states how we want the land to be left for a future.**

David McMicken  
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