

# Advocacy Toolkit 2014

Art is important to us.

Let's share our passion for it –

**We need art to live.**

**Art brings out our best.**

**Art stimulates new ideas.**

**Art creates new connections.**

**Art trains young minds.**

**Art keeps you active.**

**Art focuses the mind.**

**Art gets people talking.**

## What is advocacy?

Advocacy is a public activity that puts forward a vision – your vision – with confidence and positivity. In doing so, it creates new spaces for discussion. It forms networks of like-minded people, as well as encouraging people to think differently. It empowers creativity. It can be as simple as a conversation at the local shops, or a letter to your elected representative, or a large-scale campaign.

## Why advocate?

**Because art needs you.** Sharing the insights, the processes and the experiences of what inspires us is one of the most powerful things we can do. It creates a society where creativity is appreciated and art is valued. It builds confidence and trust in the arts as a practice, as a community and as an industry. Visible arts advocacy encourages more media coverage of the arts, giving our artists greater exposure, and inspiring our elected representatives to engage further with the arts.

**During an election year, the focus of the media as well as our elected representatives is on what our community values the most. Together, we can lead a state-wide conversation on why the arts are a critical part of any election platform.**

Art needs advocates to expand the spaces where it's experienced, the forums where it's discussed, and the ways it can be supported. Well-distributed arts advocacy such as that undertaken by Regional Arts Victoria Members generates a critical mass of public discussion that shows the world how important art is to us – and why.

## What can I do?

Become a creative catalyst. In this toolkit you'll find ways to **foster inspiring discussions** about the arts, build your relationship with **your local member**, and join a critical mass discussion on **social media**.

Here's some examples to get you started:



Regional Arts Victoria's advocacy blog:  
<http://inspiringarts.rav.net.au/>

The collected advocacy archive from the blog of Esther Anatolitis, Director, Regional Arts Victoria:  
<http://estheranatolitis.net/category/advocacy/>

# Engaging with elected representatives

## Who is my elected representative?

Government makes it as easy as possible for us to get in touch. Here's how to find members' names, contact details, bios and interests, modes of address and mailing labels:

	LOCAL COUNCIL OR SHIRE	VICTORIAN GOVERNMENT	AUSTRALIAN GOVERNMENT
FIND	<a href="http://www.dpccd.vic.gov.au/localgovernment/find-your-local-council">http://www.dpccd.vic.gov.au/localgovernment/find-your-local-council</a>	<a href="https://www.vec.vic.gov.au/lookup/LocalityFinder.htm">https://www.vec.vic.gov.au/lookup/LocalityFinder.htm</a>	<a href="http://apps.aec.gov.au/esearch/">http://apps.aec.gov.au/esearch/</a>
CONTACT	You'll find councillors' names and contact details for your region or ward on your local council or shire's website.	<a href="http://www.parliament.vic.gov.au/members">http://www.parliament.vic.gov.au/members</a>	<a href="http://www.aph.gov.au/Senators_and_Members/Guidelines_for_Contacting_Senators_and_Members">http://www.aph.gov.au/Senators and Members/Guidelines for Contacting Senators and Members</a>

## When is it best for me to get in touch?

Your elected representative wants to know and understand what's important to you. Don't leave it until you've got something pressing; nurture your relationship. Research their interests and get in touch:

- When you'd like to invite them to your exhibition, performance or other arts event – even if it wasn't funded by government – and especially if there's a media or photo opportunity for them.
- When you've just presented an arts event, and you have photographs and stories to share.
- In response to a public consultation – keep an eye on their website for when you can contribute.
- When you have a specific concern – and take good care with how you express yourself. Use language that encourages a positive response, and offer constructive suggestions.
- When you're contributing to state-wide advocacy led by Regional Arts Victoria.

Check the Sitting Dates calendar to avoid clashing your invitations with when parliament is in session –

Victorian Parliament sitting dates:

<http://www.parliament.vic.gov.au/about/daily-calendar/yearly-sitting-dates>

Australian Parliament sitting dates:

[http://www.aph.gov.au/About\\_Parliament/Sitting\\_Calendar.aspx](http://www.aph.gov.au/About_Parliament/Sitting_Calendar.aspx)

## What should my letter say?

Writing to an elected representative is a formal matter. Your letter should:

- Make its purpose clear at the outset. Are you writing simply to inform them of your work at this time? Is there a particular response you are hoping for? Are you writing to ask for a specific action? Begin with a clearly stated aim e.g. "I am writing to let you know about [X]" or "thank you for your support of [Y]" or "seek your action on [Z]" or "invite you to my show at [time] on [date]."
- Name and briefly describe the work of your organisation or project.
- Commend the work that your elected representative and their colleagues have done in the arts.
- Be clear, concise and positive, conveying your passion for the arts in your own words.
- If you're writing about a specific issue, state the issue clearly and briefly, and be specific on how it affects you, your practice, and your organisation or project.
- Use language that encourages a positive response, and offers constructive suggestions.
- Encourage greater investment in regional arts through the work of Regional Arts Victoria, explaining your connection to our organisation as a Member.
- Be no more than one page long.

Make it a habit to build your relationship, so that your local member is well informed about the arts.

# A critical mass of #inspiringarts across the state

On Twitter and Facebook, and across the social mediasphere, inspiring discussions can spread quickly, involving new people and new perspectives. If you're on social media, join in on a critical mass of arts advocacy using the hashtag **#inspiringarts**. Remember: good social media posts are **short, personal** and **connected** via links and images. See our Twitter and Facebook timelines for examples:



[@RegionalArtsVic](https://twitter.com/RegionalArtsVic)



<https://www.facebook.com/RegionalArtsVictoria>



<https://twitter.com/esther>

## How can I join in?

Follow <a href="https://twitter.com/RegionalArtsVic">@RegionalArtsVic</a> on Twitter, and Like us on <a href="#">Facebook</a> – as well as connecting with the Facebook pages of <a href="#">your local Creative Arts Facilitator</a> across regional Victoria.	Describe your creative practice and what it means to you. Be honest, be passionate, and you'll quickly compel others to share.	Use Regional Arts Victoria's artistic vision of <a href="#">Creative Communities, Creative Places and Creative Catalysts</a> to champion your work.
Share behind-the-scenes or work-in-progress photo to offer insights into where and how you make art.	Live-tweet through a performance or exhibition launch – and use our Members' Resource on how make the most of Twitter.	Quote from the Regional Arts Victoria <a href="#">Annual Report</a> to add some stats and stories to your advocacy.
Take a selfie in your studio, at rehearsal, or with your favourite work, and superimpose <b>#inspiringarts</b> on the bottom corner before sharing it via social media.	Share your experiences as an audience member or volunteer, describing your unique regional Victorian context.	Follow our blog, Inspiring Arts: <a href="http://inspiringarts.rav.net.au/">http://inspiringarts.rav.net.au/</a> and join in the discussion.

## What to say as a Regional Arts Victoria member?

All across the state, artists immersed in their practice are looking for ways to develop their craft, find new audiences and inspire their communities. That's why Regional Arts Victoria has continued to exist for over forty years. Here's what we do – and see [www.rav.net.au](http://www.rav.net.au) for more.

CREATIVE COMMUNITIES	CREATIVE PLACES	CREATIVE CATALYSTS
Regional Arts Victoria stimulates and connects our state's communities of practice.	Regional Arts Victoria champions the places where art is made, experienced and discussed.	Regional Arts Victoria fosters current and next generation creative capacity and practice.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Membership services</li> <li>• Resources, workshops and events</li> <li>• Networks and Strategic partnerships</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Performing Arts Touring</li> <li>• Education &amp; Families</li> <li>• State-wide projects including <i>Home is where the hall is, Eco-Cubby</i> and <i>Small Town Transformations</i></li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Advocacy and leadership</li> <li>• Creative Leadership Program</li> <li>• Creative Arts Facilitators</li> <li>• Access and diversity</li> <li>• Grants programs</li> </ul>

# Approaching your own advocacy

Whether you're engaging with politicians, friends, or your online community, your own words from your own perspective are always going to be the most powerful way to advocate for the arts –

## As an artist

talk about what inspires you – the what, where, how and why of your creative practice.

## As an arts lover

talk about where and how often you experience art, and what it means to you.

## As a writer

pitch stories to local media that profile the artists in your community.

## As a small business worker or owner

talk about the impact of local innovators on your trade, and on your own innovation.

## As a community leader

talk about how art brings people together, building resilience and community strength.

## As an arts volunteer

talk about how creative experiences build new connections.

# Advocacy timeline

Join in as little or as much as you'd like in this year's collective advocacy. Remember, the more voices, the stronger the impact of each individual voice. This year's Victorian parliamentary election is on Saturday, 29 November 2014. Each Victorian Parliament serves a fixed, four-year term.

ANYTIME	SEPTEMBER	OCTOBER	NOVEMBER
<p><b>Conversations</b></p> <p>At your local shops, at the pub, at the café, at the hairdresser's. Start by talking about your work, asking people what inspires them – or launch straight into election-year arts issues.</p>			
<p><b>Media</b></p> <p>Pitch stories to local editors and journalists early to ensure coverage.</p>			
<p><b>Letters</b></p> <p>Write to your local member about your arts passions and events well before the election. Then, write to introduce yourself and welcome newly-elected members, or congratulate re-elected members, after the election.</p>			
<p><b>Social media</b></p> <p>Connect with more and more people online well before the pre-election peak. Then join in the #inspiringarts critical mass:</p> <p> <a href="https://twitter.com/RegionalArtsVic">@RegionalArtsVic</a></p> <p> <a href="http://www.facebook.com/RegionalArtsVictoria">www.facebook.com/RegionalArtsVictoria</a></p>			