Recalibrating culture: production, consumption, policy
The project

Professors Deborah Stevenson and David Rowe from the Institute for Culture and Society and a research team are examining the changing modes of cultural activity and participation in Australia. This project is funded by the Australian Research Council through its Linkage Projects grant scheme in collaboration with seven industry partners.

‘Over the last decade the number of Australians engaging in paid or unpaid cultural activities has increased by over 50 per cent,’ says Professor Stevenson. ‘This is despite falling attendances at more traditional arts forms such as ballet, theatre and classical music. So what is happening in Australia’s cultural sector? What now counts as a cultural activity and how can re-conceptualising it help us to develop better cultural policy and planning?’ This research is focused on artists and cultural practitioners, exploring how they work and survive. It advances knowledge and understanding of contemporary cultural employment and activity and the findings have the potential to provide the basis for a new approach to Australian cultural policy that reflects rapidly changing conditions.

The researchers are using a case study analysis of the cultural economy of Australia’s most dynamic urban area – Greater Western Sydney – in the context of metropolitan Sydney.

Databases of cultural practitioners, productions and audiences are being examined along with the results of an online survey, interviews and field research. The project adds a deeper quality and value to ‘broader-brush’ national cultural statistics and current cultural mapping approaches, and will contribute to strategic cultural policy development and the active engagement with contemporary cultural production.