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**NAVA'S SUBMISSION TO THE SENATE
INQUIRY INTO THE IMPACT OF THE
2014 AND 2015 COMMONWEALTH
BUDGET DECISIONS ON THE ARTS**

Committee Secretary
Senate Legal and Constitutional Affairs Committee
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17th July 2015

Dear Sir/Madam

National Association for the Visual Arts (NAVA) Submission

The National Association for the Visual Arts (NAVA) welcomes the opportunity to make a submission to the Senate Inquiry into the impact of the 2014 and 2015 Commonwealth Budget decisions on the Arts and the suitability and appropriateness of a National Program for Excellence in the Arts. To inform our submission we conducted a survey of visual arts S2Ms - see case studies attached at Appendix C.

NAVA is the peak body representing and advancing the professional interests of the Australian visual and media arts, craft and design sector, comprising an estimated 25,000 practitioners and other art professionals and around 900 galleries, art schools and art support organisations. Since its establishment in 1983, NAVA has worked to promote appropriate policy and legislative changes to encourage the growth and development of the sector and provides best practice standards and a range of services to increase professionalism within the industry.

NAVA receives over 40% of its income through funding from the Australia Council and the Visual Arts and Craft Strategy (VACS). Much of the rest of our income which comes from other public sector programs, earned income and philanthropy is contingent on government funding for our core operations. Without the Australia Council and VACS support, NAVA would be unlikely to survive.

As with the majority of arts sector organisations and individual artists, NAVA is extremely concerned about the way government arts funding decisions are being made and the consequences of cuts to this funding since 2013. We have witnessed a rapid decline in government support for the arts and unsubstantiated denigration by the Arts Minister of the federal government's own arts funding and advisory body, the Australia Council for the Arts. We believe the changes threaten the sustainability of small to medium arts organisations and essential career opportunities for artists.

Since the change of government late in 2013, the Australian Government has moved from consultation and evidence based arts policy and funding decisions to a Ministerial decree model of arts support. Rather than expanding the budget and scope of possibilities for the growth and development of Australian culture, the Arts Minister has allowed the support for arts to decline. In redeploying a large proportion of the remaining government funding away from the Australia Council, he is causing major disruption which is having a ripple effect across other levels of government, in the private sector and amongst international arts partners.

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Patrons: Pat Corrigan AM, Mrs Janet Homes à Court AC, Professor David Throsby AO. ACN 003 229 285 / ABN 16 003 229 285

VISUAL ARTS SECTOR IMPACT

The infrastructure that supports Australian visual and media arts, craft and design has been in evolution for more than 150 years. It provides a support base for the work of artists and the means to bring their work to the public. Over the 40 year life of the Australia Council, critical strategic decisions have been made which ensure that there is an equitable spread of resource organisations and support to artists around the country and including regional areas. For the visual arts, this has ensured having at least one state gallery, contemporary arts space and craft/design entity in each state and territory, a network of regional galleries, a diversity of artist run enterprises and a spread of contemporary art magazines and online information resources. Decisions on funding are made by the Australia Council in collaboration with state/territory funding bodies in the context of a national overview of what is required to sustain and respond to the diversity of practices which reflect and express the spectrum of contemporary Australia life and culture.

The health of the ecology of the visual arts sector depends on this diversity. Support has been based on encouraging interconnectedness between all levels of the arts infrastructure to support artists at all stages of their careers. It recognises and values differences in artists' practice which are influenced by geography, ability, ethnicity, Indigenous culture, age and life circumstances. It also caters to the variety of community interests, from the traditional canon to the most experimental and challenging work. Some artists start as emerging, then work their way up the ladder until they mature in their practice and are taken up by the major galleries and international art biennales and art fairs. However, for many other artists at all stages of their careers, they are as likely to show their work in small to medium art and craft/design spaces and Artist Run Initiatives (ARIs) both here and overseas as they are to have work shown in the 'major' institutions. For example, artists who have represented Australia at the Venice Biennale have continued to exhibit in contemporary art spaces and ARIs.

The diversity of the arts ecology is now in jeopardy. With the dramatic contraction of the Australia Council's discretionary funding which until now has been used to support the core operations of small to medium arts organisations and independent artists, the engine room of contemporary artistic practice is in real danger. It is here that the cultural work is generated which will become the expression of Australia's cultural identity in the future.

NAVA 2015 Survey respondent:

"Our work over the past 30 years has been directly instrumental in creating and sustaining a generation of Australian artists who now enjoy enviable international reputations and/or hold influential positions in experimental and interdisciplinary arts, both within Australia and internationally. If we lose an organisation like ours, which is unique in the Australian arts ecology, we are in effect closing the door on current and future generations of artists and their audiences."

While the nature of artists' practice is enormously varied, their contribution to the quality of everyone's lives is clearly widely recognised. Over eight in ten people in the community agreed that the arts make for a richer and more meaningful life (85%) and that it is exciting to see new styles and types of art (84%).¹ ABS surveys of attendance at cultural venues and events show that 26% of the Australian population over the age of 15 attended an art gallery during 2009-10, equivalent to 4 million Australians² and in 2009, around 30% of international visitors and 43% of domestic travellers visited a museum or gallery³. Creating visual arts and crafts is the most popular form of creative activity by Australians, with one in five participating.⁴

Artists also make a contribution to a range of other industries by applying their skills beyond making their personal work. Throsby and Zednik's economic study of professional artists in Australia⁵ found that just over one third of all artists had at some time used their creative skills in industries outside the arts and most had done so on a paid basis. In the visual arts, 20% of artists apply their artistic skills in creative industries such as advertising, design and architecture, and 20% apply their skills in non-cultural sectors such as health.

Artists make a valuable contribution to the service economy which has been heralded as the future growth area for Australia. As Professor Julianne Schultz has said in her recent essay,⁶ *"(The cultural sector) is...one in which Australia has distinctive advantages, but a sector in which we are in danger of falling short. The cultural sector is one of the great new engines of influence and economic growth, one which plays to many of Australia's strengths as an educated, globally engaged, outward-looking, multi-lingual democratic state, in the same time zone as the world's most populous and increasingly middle class regions."*

"Trade and development statistics indicate that in a climate of declining global trade, the cultural sector has been growing globally at a rate of about 14 percent a year between 2002- 2008 and at that time accounted for \$592 billion. Not only is it one of the most rapidly growing sectors, but it is as UN, EU, UNESCO and other reports have shown, a sector that now accounts for about a fifth of GDP in most developed countries and is rapidly growing in others".

¹ [Australia Council for the Arts 2014 'Arts in Daily Life: Australian participation in the arts'](#)

² [ABS 2010, 'Attendance at selected cultural venues and events 2009-10' \(CATI 4114.0\)](#)

³ [Tourism Research Australia](#)

⁴ [ABS 2012 'Participation in selected cultural activities, Australia, 2010-11' \(CATI 4921.0\)](#)

⁵ [Throsby D and Zednik A, 2010, 'Do you really expect to get paid? An economic study of professional artists in Australia'](#)

⁶ [Professor Julianne Schultz AM FAHA founding editor of Griffith Review, 'Comparative advantage: culture, citizenship and soft power' published in 1a.CULTURE, ARTS & COMMUNICATIONS POLICY](#)

BRANDIS,
YOU'RE
BREAKING
MY ART

According to Cunningham and Higgs' analysis of Australian Census data ⁷, in 2011 there were 23,600 people employed in artist occupations (such as authors and painters) and 69,270 people employed in arts-related occupations (such as music teachers and jewellery designers) as their main job. A further 31,000 people were employed in other occupations within the arts industries (such as stage managers and video editors). In total, they estimated that there were almost 124,000 people employed overall in the arts as their main job, including both full time and part time workers. On average, arts employment has been growing by around 2.6% annually since 1996, which is faster than the growth in employment overall (1.9%).

The Australia Council's 2015 Arts Nation report values the sector at 4% of GDP and the contribution to national well being at \$66 billion a year. Work done by Price Waterhouse Coopers for the Copyright Council, estimates the percentage of GDP contribution (including IP) at almost 9%.

in 2009-10, households spent \$15 per week on arts-related products, equating to approximately \$6.5 billion economy-wide. Spending on entertainment and media is expected to continue growing at 3% a year to 2018. Cultural tourists spend twice as much as other tourists. Visiting museums or art galleries was the most popular cultural activity for both domestic overnight visitors (46 percent visiting) and day trippers (38 percent visiting). Attending theatre concerts or other performing arts attracted 20 percent of overnight visitors and 22 percent of day visitors.⁸ However, the export of Australian arts-related goods declined by 21 percent from 2005-06 to 2009-10. In particular, exports to the UK and USA have decreased, while the value of exports to China, Japan, Papua New Guinea and Canada has increased slightly since 2005-06.⁹

RECOMMENDATIONS

For the future economic, social and cultural wellbeing of Australia, NAVA recommends that the Commonwealth Government:

i) invests in arts and cultural development by increasing the Australia Council appropriation by \$40m p.a. indexed every year, and removing the efficiency dividend requirements;

ii) undertakes the development of a new government cultural policy framework based on a cultural impact statement (using recently developed impact assessment methodologies). On this basis decide whether the NPEA is justified.

iii) commissions a Productivity Commission review of the obstacles to and opportunities for sustainability in the cultural sector and its potential as a growth area including by:

- **examining the economic contribution of the cultural sector as a generator of goods and services, its links to manufacturing and retail and its role in direct and indirect employment**
- **estimating the social value of culture and its consequent economic benefits**
- **reporting on the structure of the cultural sector as a complex productive ecosystem**
- **examining the continuing role of the state in the cultural economy and what helps to stimulate levels of personal consumption and expenditure.**

⁷ [Cunningham and Higgs, forthcoming 'What the 2011 Census tells us about Arts Employment'](#)

⁸ ABS, 2013 'Arts and Culture in Australia: A Statistical Overview, 2012' (cat. no. 4172.0)



Image: Megan Cope, *The Blaktism*, 2014, documentation of performance.

1. IMPACT OF THE 2014 AND 2015 COMMONWEALTH BUDGET DECISIONS ON THE ARTS

1.1 Government funding roller coaster

Over the years from 2011-12 to the present, the Australia Council's fortunes have risen then fallen. In 2012, the previous Australian Government commissioned a Review of the Australia Council by consultants Gabrielle Trainer and Angus James.¹⁰ In this review, the case was successfully made for a funding increase to the Council in recognition of 'unfunded excellence', ie the organisations, individuals and projects that were deserving of government assistance but beyond the means of the Council to support.

According to the 2011-12 Cultural Funding by Government survey, total expenditure funded by all levels of government for cultural activities increased 5% in 2011-12, following a rise of less than 1% in 2010-11. However, during the 2012 -15 period, state and territory government funding has been falling.

2011-12 government expenditure for cultural activities

2011 – 12 Total government expenditure	\$6,974.3m	
Australian Government	\$2,355m	34%
State and territory governments	\$3,277m	47%
Local government	\$1,342.3m	19%
Recurrent expenditure	\$5,903.8m	85%
Capital expenditure	\$1,070.5m	15%

The Australia Council has had responsibility for managing the prescribed funding for some government initiatives and for making its own decisions using the remaining discretionary funding to support individuals, groups and small to medium arts organisations, market and audience development activities, international engagement, strategic projects, capacity building, research and operations.

Including indexation, the combined budget measures applied to the Australia Council for the 2014 -15 and 2015-16 financial years have delivered a reduction of about \$40.3m. Though Minister Brandis claims that the funds have not been cut but simply shifted to his own department, this does not acknowledge the cumulative effect of cuts in the 2014 budget over 4 years and the imposition of an efficiency dividend. In addition, the funds moved to the Ministry's control are now to be deployed to support some initiatives that were previously funded from other areas of government. This effectively represents an additional cut to the funding for the arts. Therefore the Minister's claim that there are no cuts to the arts budget is misleading.

Australia Council Budgets

Financial Year	Appropriation from government	Discretionary budget
2011-12	\$175.0m	\$50.1m
2012-13	\$188.0m	\$54.5m
2013-14	\$218.7m	\$68.0m
2014-15	\$211.7m	\$56.7m
2015-16	\$184.5m	\$40.8m

The Review of the Australia Council found that "for the better part of four decades, (the Australia Council) has been the primary national funder of artistic work of excellence and of the framework that supports that work. During that time, it has built its support from a narrow focus on organisations working in more 'traditional' art-forms, to a broad agenda supporting artists and organisations from the smallest artist run initiative to major performing arts companies.... The evidence base is strong: funding the arts sector via an expert funding body, in the form of the Council, has served Australia well."

The Review observed, "What the global financial crisis did reveal to us is the vulnerability of those areas of our economy that are open to shifts in support from the private sector and government – such as the arts sector. We are increasingly aware of the need to stimulate areas of long-term advantage in our economy, to build our economic resilience so that we are able not just to survive but to take advantage of change and instability. This will require creativity and innovation across many that do not traditionally demonstrate these characteristics. The Review believes the arts sector has a great opportunity to be a leader in this endeavour – to stimulate ideas and invention. It must be properly funded to undertake this role."

Adopting the recommendations made by the Review, in 2013 the Labor government increased its funding to the Australia Council by \$75.3 million over four years. This included \$60 million in critical funding for artists and arts organisations, \$5 million for the Major Performing Arts Excellence Pool based on an agreement with the states and territories for matching contributions, \$4 million to build the professional capacity of the arts sector and \$4 million for a data collection program to inform research for the sector. This funding supported over 1000 individual artists, 168 arts organisations, the creation of almost 9000 new works and the presentation of over 7000 new works. There were over 15 million attendances at Australia Council-supported activities.

Then with the change of government, the tide turned back the other way. With no evidence based policy or strategy, in the 2014 Federal Budget a seemingly arbitrary cut was made to the Australia Council's appropriation of \$28.2m over four years. This was alongside cuts to the large Canberra-based cultural organisations amalgamating their back office functions to save \$2.4 million over four years.

¹⁰ [Review of the Australia Council, May 2012](#)

Gone too was the remaining \$10m in funding for the Australian Interactive Games Fund and Screen Australia was cut by a savage \$38m over four years with an extra cut of \$3.6m made in the 2015 budget. In addition, the Arts Minister cut \$6m over 3 years from the Australia Council's budget to set up the National Book Council which has still to emerge. With the 2015 Budget things changed even more dramatically.

The question that must be asked is, on what basis are such radical changes being made to what has been recognized as an area of enterprise that has so much to offer Australia's future growth and development?

1.2 Arts Policy?

The Labor government expended four years of effort to produce the 'Creative Australia' national cultural policy which was launched in March 2013. The then PM Julia Gillard said, "*(it) affirms the centrality of the arts to our national identity, social cohesion and economic success.*" *Its five goals "establish the framework which will drive future action... over the next 10 years ... to ensure culture is strengthened as the expression of Australian identity and individual creativity"*. Sadly this policy had a very short 6 month life and was abandoned with the change of government in September 2013.

By contrast, the Coalition government has no arts policy. When asked about a Coalition arts policy Minister Brandis always points to the pre-election speech he gave in Western Sydney. In this speech, he stated his Party's approach which contains the foundation elements of what he has been implementing since; not so much a policy but rather a set of six key value statements:

- excellence – this was never defined and still isn't;
- integrity – favouring "art for art's sake" and art not being "mendicant to other public sector priorities";
- artistic freedom - "the arts should never be the captive of the political agenda of the day". Was he being ironic?
- self-confidence - as a well as promising to re-establish the Australian International Cultural Council to promote international touring, he said, "*while the Coalition will always encourage the telling of Australia's stories in Australian voices through the various artistic genres, we understand as well that our great artists and arts companies are and should always be significant contributors to and interpreters of the international repertoire – in particular, the great classical works and artistic movements which have shaped and defined Western civilization.*" It is this preference that has been used in the new funding model to privilege the major arts companies and their interpretation of the traditional artistic canon;

- sustainability - "*funding should be structured so as to encourage commercial success*" and there is "*an increasing role for private philanthropy in supporting the operation, in particular, of performing arts companies*". This seems to be code for investing in art that will be self-supporting and thus justifying the diminution of government support;
- accessibility - "*popular taste...funding decisions should take account of the willingness of the beneficiaries to present art which is accessible to and enjoyed by the broader public.*" Brandis seeks to shift greater focus onto regional arts "*to make the arts accessible to those who are not necessarily among the 'arts establishment', but whose appreciation of the best in our culture is not inferior to that of those who are.*" This is included as one of the main criteria in the new NPEA guidelines.

In hindsight, we now see more clearly what were the Minister's intentions.

Nevertheless, post election, Brandis continued to pay lip-service to the restructure of the Australia Council and endorsed its strategic plan a year later in August 2014. He gave no indication that he had any reservations about how the Australia Council was implementing the new plan or that he intended to bring about radical reform. Worryingly, by the Arts Minister's own admission there has been no research or consultation undertaken to provide any evidence for the need for the cumulative cuts and changes that have been made to the arts budget.

2. THE EFFECT ON FUNDING ARRANGEMENTS FOR:

2.1 small to medium arts organisations (S2Ms)

One of the important concerns expressed by the arts sector in its response to the new National Program for Excellence in the Arts (NPEA) is that it does not support operational funding for S2Ms. The funding which previously has been delivered by the Australia Council to support individual artists and the core operations of S2Ms, instead will be managed by the Ministry and channelled into supporting projects. The program seems weighted towards increasing the resources to the major performing arts organisations which already receive the bulk of the Australia Council's funding. This is likely to be exacerbated as the result of the current review of the opera which is expected to make a further claim for support from the rapidly shrinking Australia Council resources.

In 2013/14 the core Australia Council funding for 140 small to medium Key Organisations was \$22.8m. On the basis of this organisations were able to leverage an additional \$133 million income from sponsorship, philanthropy, ticket sales and other government support, a multiplication factor of almost 6. Now with a 1/3 cut to its discretionary funding, the Council is faced with a terrible dilemma – where to make the cuts but try to maintain the viability of the contemporary arts sector.

In 2013 the Visual Arts Board of the Australia Council commissioned research which entailed extensive consultation with the sector. The outcomes were published as the 'Talking Points' independent research report:

*"A topic that generated interest was the benefit of funding large institutions versus small to medium organisations. In general, the arts sector has a remarkably collegiate orientation. Participants recognised the relative merits of organisations of all sizes across the tiers. Nevertheless, the research evidenced a sense that the small to medium sector is particularly vulnerable and that additional resourcing in this area is likely to have a disproportionately advantageous effect. The arts sector generates a lot of capacity for relatively little spend in the small to medium tier and a modicum of further investment could fuel ambition."*¹¹

*"While arts workers' wages can be a fraught topic when artists are often unpaid, in the small to medium sector in particular, salaries are often not commensurate with experience and in some instances highly qualified senior staff earn less than the average weekly wage."*¹²

A previous evaluation project had been undertaken in 2010 to assess the impact of relatively modest government investment (around \$12m/year) through the Visual Arts and Craft Strategy (VACS). It found that the overarching achievement of VACS had been to stabilize the sector. Across the 4 areas of Artistic, Cultural, Economic and Social goals, there was impressive evidence of the multiplier effect of a modest amount of government investment (see Appendix B below).

The VACS report concluded that, *"Effective and ongoing government support is seen as critical for the ongoing sustainability of the sector. The key immediate challenge to sector sustainability is due to rising costs, notably rents, salaries and artists fees. Rising costs of touring are also threatening touring activities. Digital technology poses challenges to the sector, in terms of available skills and resources. Access to appropriate digital resources is seen as critical to ongoing successful sector development"*.

After all the cuts, the Australia Council's remaining discretionary funds are \$62M, which is \$23M less than expected. Those funds support the Australia Council's grants model and current Key Organisations, as well as national and international development activities, capacity building, research and operations. Of these remaining funds, \$22M is budgeted for Key Organisation funding to honour the multiyear contracts for these small to medium organisations until the end of 2016. In response to the call for expressions of interest for 6 year funding, the Australia Council received 418 applications. This program has now been cancelled after 2016. What will happen to the key organisations and the many arts workers they employ, plus all the artists who rely on their services is an open and scary question.

NAVA 2015 Survey respondent

"Our organisation was on the cusp of receiving large project based funding and being eligible for multi year funding from the Australia Council. The cancellation of the June round of project grants resulted in a possible loss of \$15,000 and the likelihood of receiving multi year funding is now unlikely, meaning we can no longer plan to hire another staff member to provide long term sustainability on a management level, or assist artists with financial amounts for material support for funded programs. This will place a greater financial burden on artists exhibiting."

Many of the S2Ms are funded through partnerships with state/territory governments. While the Visual Arts and Craft Strategy (VACS) funding has been quarantined, this is a top up to core funding for visual arts organisations. Already in some states, the support for core funding has contracted. The state arts ministers are discussing how to react to what many see as a cost shifting exercise by the Commonwealth, similarly to what has been happening in health and education. At this stage it is not known what will happen but without sufficient funding, contraction or closure seems inevitable for many S2Ms.

NAVA 2015 survey respondent:

"Without multi-year operational funding from the Australia Council and VACS, our organization would have to close. We cannot operate on project grants and donations alone. In order to operate effectively we need the security of core recurrent funding as a base to which we value add from other sources. We already work hard to raise around \$60% of our turnover annually from sources other than government, but these sources are by nature short term, volatile and project based. Australia Council funds provide the consistency required to employ staff, maintain overhead costs and forward plan our artistic program."

2.2 individual artists

The NPEA doesn't provide funding for individual artists and as has been mentioned above, the bulk of the cut to the Australia Council's discretionary funding will fall on grants to independent artists and S2Ms. Only some of the state and territory governments provide funding for individual artists, and their funding levels have been falling as well.

In addition, because of the imposition of the \$7.3 efficiency dividend on the Australia Council, it has cancelled programs which were of immediately tangible benefit to artists: ArtStart and Artists in Residence. These programs and other initiatives funded in the projects category provided career development opportunities that were often the game changer, setting artists on a path of success that they otherwise would struggle to achieve.

¹¹ [Phip Murray 'Talking Points: a Snapshot of Contemporary Visual Arts 2013-14 Australia Council](#)

¹² *ibid*

The situation for mid-career and senior artists has emerged as one in need of attention. Several confluent conditions have created problems including: the global financial crisis which destabilized the art market; changes to legislation for the Self Managed Super Funds which have increased the cost of investing in art and resulted in divestment by investors of their collections, flooding the market and lowering prices; the on-line environment which has encouraged buyers to turn their interest to purchasing overseas artists' work instead of buying locally.

As a result of decreasing support in Australia, many of our best artists have been moving overseas. Because of this disregard and contracting opportunities we are losing some of our best talent.

2.3 young and emerging artists

Overall, direct benefits reported by early career artists who received Australia Council grants were: feeling encouraged to continue as an artist; feeling more confident as an artist; having credibility given to their work or practice; being helped to develop their own practice and to develop networks and contacts with other artists.

Three years after receiving the grant, artists who secured Australia Council grants had made more career progress than artists who did not receive a grant. On average, they spent a greater proportion of time on their creative practice, reported higher level of both creative income and total income. They were more likely to have a career plan or strategy in place, to have conducted a range of networking activities, and to do the type of artistic activities that characterise an establishing rather than an emerging artist.¹³

NAVA 2015 Survey respondent:

“As a student gallery, the cuts to arts funding has no immediate or direct effect at this stage. However, we acknowledge our gallery plays a role in establishing the platform for which emerging artists careers are launched. With this major change in Australia Council funding that cuts off all avenues for direct support to young artists, it is likely students will realise there is little to no point in going to art school in Australia, which will in turn have a dramatic effect on future enrolments, our place in the overall ecology of the arts sector, and indeed the growth of tomorrow’s art stars.”

Tertiary education providers are worried that the changes will greatly diminish opportunities for their graduating students at the beginning of their careers and affect the course decisions of incoming students in the future. The cancellation of the ArtStart program in particular will be a loss to emerging artists as it offered grants of up to \$10K for people who had completed an accredited course to help them establish their professional practice.

One of the ways that graduating students continue to gain skills is through forming groups and setting up ‘Artist Run Initiatives’ (ARIs). They provide a now essential support base for other emerging artists. These entities have become the most recently established level of visual and multi-arts infrastructure and are regarded as sites for the most innovative, experimental work which presages future directions. Some of the most successful of these ARIs have been securing organisational and project funding from the Australia Council.

¹³ [Australia Council for the Arts 2013, ‘Longitudinal Study of Early Career Artists’](#)



Image: pvi collective, *resist: the cultural policy*, 2011 Photo: Sarah Rowbottom

The guidelines of the new NPEA indicate that these entities would be unlikely to secure funding in any of the three categories offered by the program. The consequence will be the loss of the sites where not only the upcoming generation of artists launch their careers, gain essential in-practice experience and exposure to audiences, but also where more mature artists can test out new ideas.

NAVA 2015 Survey respondent:

“Our support of young artists would be greatly impacted as the loss of Australia Council funding would cease our ability to offer free exhibition opportunities and artists fees”.

2.4 the Australia Council

Acknowledging that everything is in a process of rapid change, the government commissioned the Review of the Australia Council (by consultants Gabrielle Trainer and Angus James). After extensive consultation with the arts sector and beyond, the Review made recommendations for change. In response, from 2013/14 the Council began to radically restructure its mode of operation and has been in the process of implementing changes to its grant programs which included adopting a six year funding model to offer stability to key arts organisations and foster their capacity to forward plan and leverage private sector support.

Only last year Minister Brandis signed off on the Council's 5 year strategic plan. This included being responsible for a number of government initiatives including:

- Artists in Residence (now cancelled 2015)
- Artstart (now cancelled 2015)
- Creative Communities Partnership Initiative (now cancelled 2015)
- Australian Fellowships, New Work and Presentation Initiative (moved into the new Australia Council grants model)
- Get Reading (discontinued by the Ministry in 2014)
- Major Festivals Initiative (back to Ministry for the Arts 2015)
- National Regional Programs
 - Playing Australia (staying with Australia Council)
 - Festivals Australia (back to Ministry for the Arts 2015)
 - Visions of Australia (back to Ministry for the Arts 2015)
 - Contemporary Touring Initiative (staying with Australia Council)
 - Contemporary Music Touring (staying with Australia Council)
- Sounds Australia (jointly funded by the Council and Ministry and currently under discussion)
- Visual Arts and Craft Strategy – renewed to 2018/19

Following the recommendations of the Australia Council Review Report, several government programs were shifted from the Arts Department to come under the aegis of the Council. With no explanation, now three of these programs have been cherry picked to go back to the control of the Ministry.

Within months of the Australia Council implementing its new plan, Minister Brandis' views seem to have changed dramatically. The role of Council as the federal government's arts funding and advisory body is now being called into question. The comments by the Arts Minister and his setting up of a rival program are discrediting the authority and credibility of the Australia Council.

Minister Brandis said there is a widespread perception that the Australia Council is “a closed shop”. *“We would be blind to pretend that there aren't complaints from those who miss out, who have a perception that the Australia Council is an iron wall; that you are either inside or outside,” he said. “I've heard that from so many people. That is particularly a perception held outside Melbourne and Sydney.”*¹⁴

As a consequence of the government's budget cuts the Australia Council has announced that:

- the 6 year funding program for organisations has been suspended
- current contracts of multi-year funded organisations will be honoured until their conclusion at the end of 2016
- existing applications can be assessed within the September round, which will include multi-year project support for individual artists and arts organisations.

This has thrown the whole system of funding for S2Ms and independent artists into total disarray.

There is widespread fear in the arts industry that the Arts Minister means to gradually shift all the funding under his direct control through absorbing all programs into his department and then get rid of the Australia Council altogether.

2.5 private sector funding of the arts

With very few exceptions, private sector support is given for projects not core funding for organisations. To secure the interest of the private sector, arts organisations need stability and security. The major arts organisations have whole departments dedicated to fundraising and enjoy substantial support. For the S2Ms, philanthropy has been building slowly but meaningfully over the last ten years, but this is now under threat.

*“The arts sector and philanthropists were adamant that private sector money is not designed to save the government from investing in arts and culture, but rather to augment it.”*¹⁵

¹⁴ Brandis radio Interview by Michael Cathcart, Books and Arts, ABC RN 19th May 2015

¹⁵ Phip Murray [“Talking Points: a Snapshot of Contemporary Visual Arts 2013-14, Australia Council”](#)

Financier Joe Skrzyński, a director of Philanthropy Australia, questioned how the smaller companies would survive if they lost their core funding through the Australia Council. He said this was building-block money from which artists and companies create programming that sponsors and donors are attracted to. He was quoted as saying: *“Philanthropy is great for funding new initiatives that appeal to donors - the bells and whistles of the arts sector - but it is counterproductive if it is based on matching funds that have been peremptorily ripped from core funding in the first place.”* He continued, *“It also tends to favour the more established companies who have resources to go out and get the donors ...”*¹⁶

This has been somewhat reluctantly affirmed by the director of the arts sponsorship and philanthropy organisation, Creative Partnerships Australia during a recent radio interview¹⁷ and again by one of the larger philanthropic trusts in conversation with NAVA earlier this week.

2.6 state and territory programs of support to the arts

Although state and territory government funding increased from 2007-08 to 2011-12, it has since taken a general downward trend and state government budget cuts to the arts in 2014-15 are likely to continue.

¹⁶ quoted in an article in the Australian by journalist Michaela Boland 27th May 2015

¹⁷ 'Books and Arts' program, ABC RN Tues 19th May 2015

Because all the states and territory governments have negotiated co-funding arrangements with the Australia Council through the VACS agreement, cuts to core funding may destabilise these partnership agreements. Many of them had restructured their programs and deadlines to match with the Australia Council's 6 year funding model. The states and territories are seeing the changed arrangements as a cost shifting exercise, putting them under pressure to make up the shortfall in order to ensure that appropriate infrastructure can remain viable. NAVA has been informed that discontent has been expressed in letters from some state and territory arts ministers to Minister Brandis. If the states and territories don't fill the gap, the future of S2Ms looks bleak.

2.7 protection of freedom of artistic expression and prevention of political influence

We got a clue to Minister Brandis' intention to gain control when, in the rewriting of the Australia Council Act in 2013, he attempted to secure inclusion of much greater powers for ministerial intervention in arts funding decisions. However, at that stage he was unsuccessful.

For the 40 year life of the Australia Council, it has applied the principles of arm's length funding and peer assessment. This has been the bulwark against the kind of political influence that can be applied when arts funding is managed by a department of government under a Minister's control. As the 2012 Review of the Australia Council observed, *“(The Council's) role is to work as the expert agency quarantined from the tides of government and politics by its legislative mandate.”*



Image: Tom Nicholson, *Indefinite distribution*, 2010 documentation from public action

This protection has been strongly defended by the arts sector and those in the community who value freedom of artistic expression. It is a compelling reason why the shift of such a substantial proportion of the Australia Council's funding to come under the control of the Arts Minister is causing so much dismay and resistance right across the arts sector.

Though there have been many others, the clearest recent example of political intervention was in the case where artists threatened to boycott the Sydney Biennale exhibition because of the corporate support provided by Transfield, one arm of which had just taken up a government contract to provide services to the asylum seeker detention centres in Nauru and Manus Island. In his letter to the chair of the Australia Council, Minister Brandis said at the time *"I understand that Commonwealth funding is provided to the Sydney Biennale through the Australia Council, under a three-year funding agreement which expires in 2015. No doubt, when renewal of the funding agreement beyond 2015 arises for consideration, the Australia Council will have regard to this episode and to the damage which the board of the Sydney Biennale has done."* He gave this instruction, despite acknowledging that the Australia Council Act 2013 contains an explicit prohibition against a Minister giving a direction in relation to the making of a decision by the Council in a particular case, in relation to the provision of support. He went on to direct the Australia Council to develop a policy which made Council funding to artists and arts organisations contingent on their acceptance or continuation of private sector support unless it was proved to be 'unreasonable'. Brandis explicitly said if he was not satisfied with a new policy drafted by the Council, he then would dictate it himself.

Another example of Minister Brandis' political intervention was reported in a recent Crikey article, ¹⁸*"the major performing arts companies have been under intense pressure from the federal government in recent days not to speak out against George Brandis' new National Programme for Excellence in the Arts , ...*

We understand that in the run-up to last Friday's national protests, several major companies circulated a draft letter criticising the Australia Council funding cuts and calling for support for the small-to-medium sector. The Sydney Theatre Company was one of those companies.

However, after Brandis' office got wind of the letter, pressure was applied directly to the STC's chair, David Gonski. Crikey understands a meeting was held between Gonski and one or more advisers from Brandis' office. The STC backed away from any public statement about the funding cuts, and other majors, sniffing the wind, also took flight."

¹⁸ Ben Eltham, 'Major arts companies throw little guys under the bus after Brandis shake-up', Crikey, 29th May 2015

A further case is reported in Hansard's record of the 2014 Senate Estimates Committee proceedings of a year ago; a demonstration of shameless political intimidation on the part of Minister Brandis and the Chair of the Senate

Committee, Senator Ian Macdonald in their combined interrogation of the chief executive of the Australia Council, Tony Grybowski, over rejection of a particular funding application. Was it just coincidence that the project in question - the Festival of Chamber Music in Townsville - was in the electorate of Senator Macdonald?

From the Hansard report:

Brandis: *"... as a Queensland senator and as somebody who has taken a close interest in Townsville Chamber Music Festival having attended it twice now, including this year [2014], I have made my view very clear to the Australia Council that it is the government's wish, and it is my wish as the minister, that that music festival continue to be supported."*

Chair: *"Well, Mr Grybowski, ... I hope that, by next year, you will be everyone's hero and much loved because you have done the right thing by that organisation. I cannot ask you to prejudge applications, but you are saying that you feel fairly confident that you can give a solid indication to the festival that they will be considered in the February grants?"*

Grybowski: *"Yes"*.

It was a clear demonstration of what the Minister is prepared to do and why the arm's length decision-making principle has been so zealously defended by the arts sector.

The arts are often the subject of censorship and there have been times when NAVA has been called upon to defend artists against attempted political pressure. In its publication, the 'Art Censorship Guide' NAVA documents a number of cases where political pressure has been brought to bear. The one that follows occurred during the height of sensitivity around the protests in detention centres by asylum seekers during the period of the Howard Coalition government.

"NAVA knows of threats to withdraw funding from groups showing provocative or contentious work. A notable case concerned a work by the artist and lecturer Michael Agzarian entitled 'No More Lies' exhibited at Wagga Wagga Art Gallery, NSW in 2005. It showed digitally enhance images of the then Prime Minister, Attorney General and Immigration Minister with their lips sewn together. After a (public) complaint was lodged with the Prime Minister's Office, suggesting the work might amount to treason, a departmental official rang the gallery to ask whether the exhibition had been funded by the Federal Government's 'Visions' program. The risk was clear: galleries showing artists critical of the government could lose their funding."

**ARTISTS
DRAW
THE
LINE**

2.8 access to a diversity of quality arts and cultural experiences

NAVA 2015 survey respondent

“What people sometimes don’t realise - is that a funded organisation may be actually supporting ten unfunded ones with outcomes and engagement of their own. For instance, a visual art gallery/studio might support a printmaking group, a disability artists group, an indigenous artist group, a youth group, a theatre or music group, etc. All of which access the resources of the gallery/studio. S2Ms are hubs of creativity and community. Taking one down can have an exponential effect on the entire sector. This has been demonstrated in Queensland following Newman’s cuts to the arts and the subsequent closure of a number of S2M organisations and the smaller ones that were relying on them.”

The arts industry is an enormously diverse ecology in which all the elements are interconnected and interdependent. Each element needs to be sustainable for the whole to work effectively. The contraction or loss of funding to S2Ms may be used to concentrate and expand resources for the major organisations but reinforces the limitations of what they can offer. In their own public statement through AMPAG on 17 June, 2015 the ‘majors’ acknowledge the necessity for the diversity which is ensured by the S2Ms.

“There is a significant concern in the arts sector that the shift in funding from the Australia Council’s grant program to the NPEA will reduce the overall level of funds available to nurture and develop artistic vibrancy and opportunities for emerging artists in the small medium and independent sector.

The transferring of funds from the Australia Council has created significant uncertainty and instability in the small to medium sector. It has come in the middle of the Australia Council’s grant assessment process for this part of the sector. The budget announcement has stopped that process.

The artistic value and contribution of the small to medium arts organisations and independent artists is significant and important, but their ongoing existence is fragile. The MPA companies have a significant role to develop artists and the art form, and we recognise that our own work and our own long-term vibrancy is entwined, with and impacted by, the overall health and vibrancy of the broader arts ecosystem.”

For people living in the regions, there is much less access to the range of cultural resources available in urban areas. While there is a great deal of excellent local arts production, artists and audiences greatly value the opportunity to see first hand the work of other artists whose practice is very different from their own.

NAVA 2015 survey respondent

“Although we are not currently receiving DIRECT federal government funding, as a regional gallery we would suffer enormously if other institutions no longer received funding to enable touring exhibitions to be displayed in our gallery. Touring exhibitions are critically important to the cultural life & evolution of our town. These touring shows are the lifeblood of our gallery & without them we would certainly need to shed staff.”

NAVA 2015 survey respondent

“The cuts would directly affect our exhibition program. Many of the touring exhibitions we receive are funded by Visions Australia, or supported by Australia Council grants. These tend to be the highest calibre, nationally significant exhibitions which would not be able to tour to regional areas by other means. The cuts would decrease the quality and number of touring exhibitions for regional communities.”

2.9 the funding criteria and implementation processes to be applied to the program

In consultation with the broader arts sector, NAVA has the following concerns with the NPEA guidelines:

- unlike the Australia Council criteria for assessment, there is no definition of ‘excellence’, the critical central term used in the NPEA against which judgements are to be made about what is worthy of support;
- the NPEA program focuses on projects and specifically excludes funding for individual artists or for the operations of companies. Also excluded is creative writing and gaming;
- two of the three areas of support - endowments and international touring - seem to be written with the major organisations specifically in mind. Indeed on 18th June the Arts Minister chose to discuss the international touring program with only a few of the major performing arts organisations rather than to meet with the 65 artists and S2M representatives who had come to Canberra from across the whole country to meet with politicians from all parties;
- the program favours companies that have the considerable resources and experience needed to be competitive. Most S2Ms are not funded or resourced for this challenge. The well established and resourced organisations will have a considerable advantage in being able to invest in the extensive preparation required, develop large ambitious projects and prepare convincing applications;
- because there is no national framework to guide decision making, and applications will be considered by the Ministry at any time in order of receipt, ad hoc choices are likely to be made without regard to how they mesh together to produce a coherent and broad cultural mix. The shortcomings of having no cultural policy become evident;

- the NPEA guidelines indicate that there will be around three assessors and one or two of them will be 'independent assessors'. They will be chosen to make the selection along with departmental staff, and will be appointed by the Minister and directly accountable to him. The Minister has also indicated that 'audiences' should be represented as assessors. This does not in any way equate to the principles of arm's length funding or peer assessment. It will concentrate decision making power with very few individuals working for or approved by the Minister, rather than a broadly representative group from across the breadth of the sector taking into account the relevance of their experience to the decisions to be made;

- the Minister can withhold information about who has been funded. This lack of transparency enables decisions to be made with political motives. To avoid the potential for this to occur, the identity of all recipients of public money and the quantity of funds allocated must be on the public record;

- the way in which the funding programs offered by the NPEA, Australia Council, possibly the Book Council and the State and Territory governments will work in relation to one another is still unclear.

2.10 implications of any duplication of administration and resourcing

The government has yet to produce the evidence for why two competing programs are necessary or justified. It has created parallel programs with considerable overlap whose objectives are largely shared though they are realized through different mechanisms.

There is duplication in administration and resources, advertising, advice and assistance, grant management, assessment, funding distribution, monitoring the application of the funds, acquittal processes, documentation and archiving. Also duplicated is the process of devolution of the funds and reporting on their use by government.

For the time poor arts sector this will mean greater investment of effort in making duplicate applications to two separate bodies, written to their guideline specifications.

CONCLUSION

Finally, NAVA urges the Senate Committee to support our recommended actions and advise that they should be followed by the Government.

NAVA asks that the Senate Committee agrees to hold public hearings in several states/territories and that a NAVA representative be given the opportunity to speak at one of them. Making public the recent government decisions and their consequences could generate informed public debate about the desired future for the arts in Australia.

Yours sincerely



Tamara Winikoff OAM
Executive Director

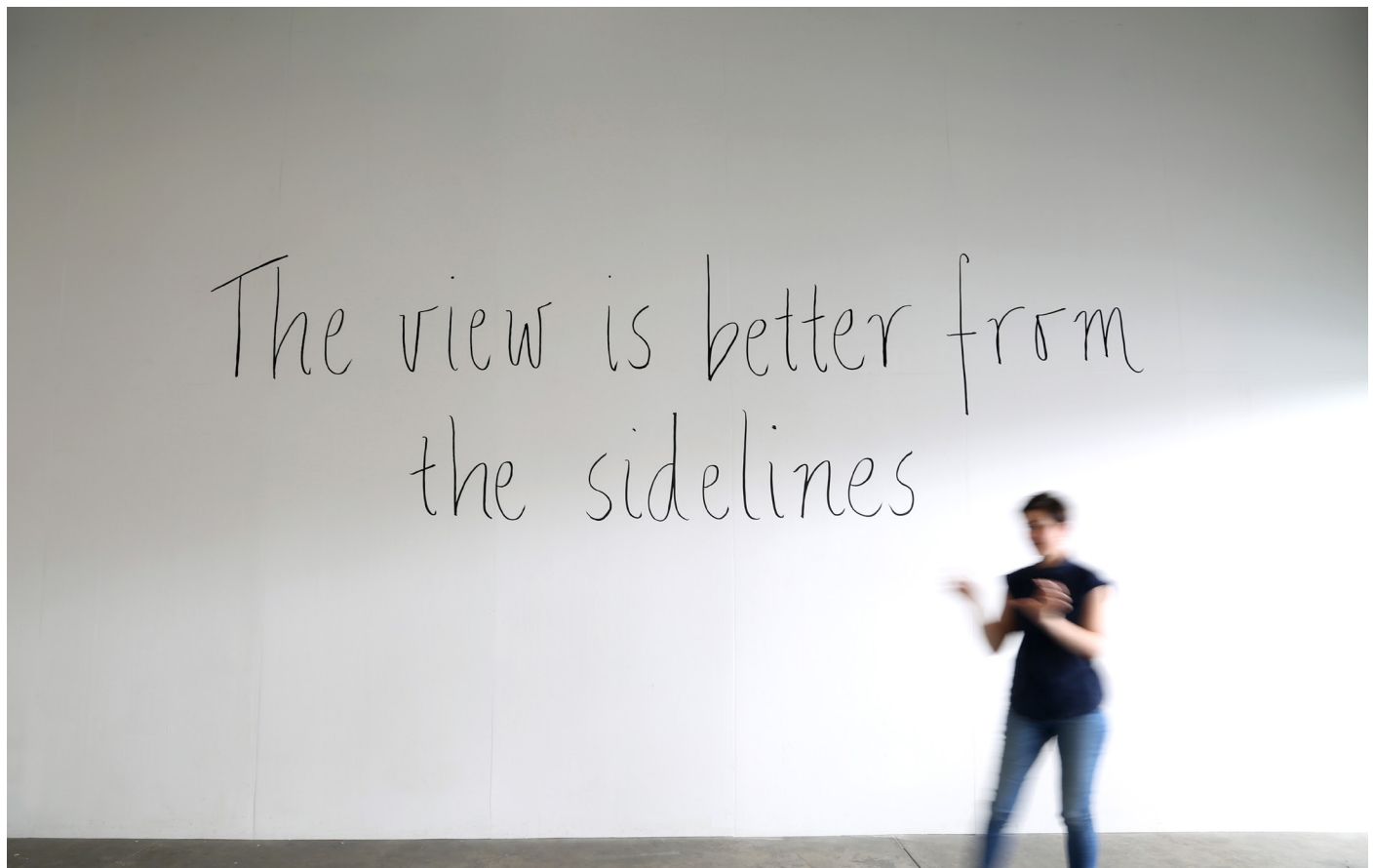


Image: Courtney Coombs, *The View*, 2014 Photo: Sam Cranstoun

APPENDIX A

From 2013 Australia Council Review Report Funding Increase recommendations

Recommendation 6

In order to facilitate implementation of the new purpose for the Council, the Review recommends that the Australian Government provide additional funding of \$21.25 million per annum to the Council to cover current funding pressures and changes to its purpose as follows:

1. Research and Advocacy – The provision of this additional funding will be tied to a Key Performance Indicator as agreed with the Minister. Funding is to be used by the Council to develop a detailed and systematic data collection program for the benefit of the Australian Government and the sector as a whole (much the same as that undertaken by Screen Australia, including an annual 'state of the industry' report). Additional funding of \$1 million per annum would enable this work to take place.
2. The Council to act as a funding generator – the Council's role in developing funding to the arts from the sector could be enhanced through the addition of a 'commercial' funding program allowing the Council to develop new models of funding for the sector, such as micro-loans and matching programs. Additional funding of \$3 million per annum would enable the Council to establish a pilot program rolling out new models of funding.
3. MPA contestable fund – top-up funding to the Council of \$1.25 million per annum as the Australia Government contribution to establish a \$2.5 million excellence funding pool available to MPA organisations on a competitive basis, to reward outstanding performance in fulfilling MPA goals with criteria to be determined as part of the opening up of the MPA organisations to broader peer review.
4. Unfunded excellence – As discussed above, the Council has identified significant levels of unfunded excellence among its current application base. On the basis of estimates that unfunded excellence for the Council is about \$15 million, this Review proposes top-up funding of this amount to meet this growing gap in the sector.
5. Professional development – The Council has an important role in building the professional capacity of the arts sector. Funding of \$1 million per annum will assist the Council to develop, in collaboration with training and development providers and private sector mentors, formal programs of professional development for arts sector managers and cultural leaders. This will also fund the investigation and early development of an arts careers information portal and a mentor bank to provide opportunity and expert support for those who work in the sector.

Recommendation 7

The Review recommends that, in order to provide the Council with increased funding flexibility, the Australian Government pursue with the states and territories the opening up of the MPA Framework to allow for competitive funding based on peer review.

Recommendation 8

To arrest the erosion of the Council's funding base, the Review also recommends exempting the Council from any further application of the efficiency dividend.

APPENDIX B

Excerpts from the Visual Arts and Craft Strategy evaluation report published by the Australia Council on 2010

Points from Executive Summary

Artistic

VACS-funded organisations have enhanced the quality of their support to artists. The content and production value of catalogues, quality in the installation of exhibitions, and payment of artists' fees have all improved under VACS funding. This has also been matched by a solid rise in the number of exhibitions by both group and solo artists. State and territory arts agencies have increased the number of individual artists funded by 34 percent between 2001 and 2009. With the support of VACS funding, the VAB has increased the overall number of individual artists supported by nearly 48 percent over the VACS period, while VAB funding for new work by individual artists has increased by 76 percent in the same period.

Cultural

The visual arts sector has increased cultural engagement with urban, regional and remote communities through national touring programs and has increased support for Indigenous arts activities. The increase in artistic production under VACS has stimulated audience engagement and the demand for contemporary visual arts, craft and design. The average number of exhibitions and events by VACS-funded organisations has increased from 634 (2001-2003) to 777 a year (2007– 2008). Many of these exhibitions and events were sustained over longer periods of time. Audience numbers have increased by 96 percent between 2001 and 2008.

Economic

VACS-funded organisations make a significant contribution to Australia's economy. Of the eight CMC aims, five have an economic impact. Between 2004 and 2008, the annual average income of VACS-funded organisations totalled \$83.8 million. VACS organisations generated 53.3 percent (\$44.8 million) of this revenue through philanthropy, sponsorship and earned income. The Australia Council and state and territory arts agencies have provided stable funding for VACS-funded organisations, and this support has enabled them to attain a higher percentage of non-government earnings.

Social

VACS funding has provided fresh opportunities for audiences to engage with contemporary visual arts. VACS-funded organisations engage in meaningful ways with audiences across Australia through their innovative and responsive public programming. The VACS-funded organisations offering membership programs have nearly quadrupled their members in the VACS period 2001 to 2009 (3,384 in 2001 to 12,681 in 2009). This growth shows organisations have enhanced public awareness of their activities and are engaging with their audiences in a meaningful way."

APPENDIX C

Case studies from NAVA's 2015 survey of visual arts organisations

1. Regionally based gallery

In this example of a regional gallery, about 6% of their 2014 funding came from the Australia Council with 12% from VACS funding. The remainder came from local, and private support and self generated income. With an annual turnover of less than \$500,000, in 2014 they:

- supported through programming 8 Indigenous artists, 12 artists with disabilities, 40 artists under 35 and 280 artists from regional Australia
- employed 4 staff and 40 volunteers and interns
- ran over 66 programs and collaborated with over 150 partners
- had more than 50,000 visitors to their programs
- engaged with over 10,000 online visitors
- contributed over \$90,000 in financial and in-kind support to artists.

The loss of Australia Council program funding for them could contract the organisation resulting in an estimated loss of:

- 33% staff jobs
- 10% audiences
- 50% of their programs
- 10% support for artists.

The concern for this gallery is that the cuts to Australia Council funding could potentially jeopardise other funding in future, for instance their VACS funding issued by their state government but managed by the Australia Council. The flow on effect of the cuts to the Australia Council budget would be to the gallery's local community, for which regional galleries are thriving hubs of culture and activity in regional areas of Australia. The cuts in this instance would affect the gallery's ability to deliver 50% of its current program, affect its ability to support artists particularly regional artists, decrease audiences numbers and affect its ability to sustain the 150+ partnerships they have built with group within their community (printmaking, theatre, music, disability, and youth groups etc). The impact of reduced staff would significantly impact on the gallery's day-to-day operations, its capacity to manage volunteers, and its ability to seek funding from alternative sources.

2. Metropolitan based gallery

In this example of a metropolitan gallery, about 25% of the organisation's funding came from the Australia Council in 2014. The remainder came from local, state and private support and self generated income. With an annual turnover of close to \$650,000 in 2014 they:

- supported through programming 3 Indigenous artists, 1 artist with disabilities, 37 artists under 35 and 30 artists from regional Australia
- employed 10 staff and 15 volunteers and interns
- ran over 26 programs and collaborated with 9 partners
- commissioned 12 new works from artists
- had over 60,000 visitors to their programs
- engaged with 70,000 online visitors
- contributed over \$250,000 in financial and in-kind support to artists.

The loss of Australia Council program funding for them could contract the organisation resulting in an estimated loss of:

- 65% of staff jobs
- 60% of audiences
- 59% of their programs
- 68% support for artists.

The potential loss of Australia Council funding would impact on the stability and artistic vibrancy of the organisation. If the organisation were to survive these cuts the result would be dramatic losses to staff jobs. The gallery would need to reduce its current program to a bare minimum at 40% of its current programming, which would have flow on effects potentially halving audience numbers.

3. Artist Run Initiative (ARI)

In this example of an ARI, about 13.5% of the ARI's funding came from the Australia Council in 2014. The remainder came from state/local government support and self generated income. With an annual turnover of just over \$250,000 in 2014 they:

- supported through programming 62 artists under 35, 6 artists from regional Australia and 16 artists from socially and economically disadvantaged communities
- employed 1 staff member and 38 volunteers and interns
- ran 68 programs and collaborated with 12 partners. These programs were populated via call out which received 459 applications.
- presented an artistic program comprised of over 60 new works created specifically for their programs
- supported 8 emerging artists and writers through fees and residencies to create new works.
- had 9,000 visitors to their programs
- engaged with 29,600 online visitors
- contributed over \$170,000 in financial and in-kind support to artists.

The loss of Australia Council program funding for them could contract the organisation resulting in an estimated loss of:

- staff hours reduced by 10%
- 85% support for artists.*

ARIs already operate on limited resources often run by directors on a volunteer basis. In the case of this ARI, the cuts would limit the exhibition and career development opportunities for the next generation of emerging artists, curators and arts managers. For this ARI the reduction of government funding means that in the future they would need to pass on the costs of the exhibition to young emerging artists and practitioners. This would particularly affect artists from socially and economically disadvantaged communities. It would also discourage experimentation and innovation from the earliest years of an artistic career.

4. Visual Arts Magazine

In the example of one visual arts magazine, about 25% of their 2014 funding came from the Australia Council. The remainder came from state and territory government, advertising, private support and self generated income.

With an annual turnover of under \$350,000 in 2014 they:

- commissioned 130 new articles from individual writers
- commissioned over \$70,000 worth of articles, printed 10 issues, with distribution of 5,000 per issue and average readership 100,000 per issue
- employed 4 staff and 4 interns/volunteers
- ran 3 other related programs and collaborated with 10 partners
- attracted more than 40% of its income through advertising.

The loss of Australia Council program funding for them could contract the organisation resulting in an estimated loss of:

- 50% loss in staff jobs
- 50% loss in publications
- 50% readership
- 50% of their other programs
- 50% loss of financial support for writers.

Changes to funding to the Australia Council would require changes to the publication's current business model. Currently over 40% of this publication's revenue stream is from advertising, which is leveraged from both Australia Council support as well as other streams of funding. The potential loss of Australia Council funding would not only impact on current staff levels for the publication but also impact on the employment of 130+ freelance writers and contractors. It would also mean less paid opportunities for emerging writers, artists and curators to have a platform to engage in critical thought, discussion and debate and the opportunity for the interested community to keep abreast of arts news and opinion.



Image: National Day of Action June 2015 Photo: Joan Cameron-Smith