

Committee Secretary  
Senate Legal and Constitutional Affairs Committee  
PO Box 6100  
Parliament House  
Canberra ACT 2600

### **Submission to the Senate Inquiry into the 2014 and 2015 Commonwealth Budget decision on the Arts**

Dear Sir / Madam

This submission is made by the Public Galleries Association of Victoria (PGAV), the peak body representing 50 galleries across metropolitan and regional Victoria.

The public gallery sector in Victoria is a major contributor to Australia's cultural, artistic, social and economic wealth. In 2014, our members presented 536 exhibitions which featured the work of 3,900 Australian visual artists to more than \$4 million visitors. Public galleries in Victoria hold over 170,000 items in their collections with a combined worth of \$4.8 billion.

#### **(a) the impact of the 2014 and 2015 Commonwealth Budget decisions on the Arts:**

##### **Consultation process**

The Federal Government's decision to reallocate \$104.8 million over four years from the Australia Council for the Arts to the Ministry for the Arts to establish a National Program for Excellence in the Arts has been undertaken without consultation and has created incredible uncertainty in the sector as it tries to determine the impact. **We ask for greater consultation between the Minister for the Arts, the Australia Council and peak bodies within the arts industry in the future.**

##### **Mandating of Australia Council funding**

Further, the decision to mandate Australia Council funding to the 28 major performing arts companies means there is now \$23 million less available for the Australia Council's grants, Key Organisations, national and international development activities, capacity building, research and operations. **We believe this decision will have a disproportionate impact on individual artists and small-to-medium arts organisations, which will significantly impact public galleries and the visual arts.**

##### **IMPACT ON PUBLIC GALLERIES & THE VISUAL ARTS**

During consultation with our members they identified the direct impact of this decision upon their operations, including the following:

- **Less Australian visual art, particularly in regional Victoria**  
Visual artists rely on Australia Council grants to develop new work. With less money available for grants, less visual art will be produced which will result in less Australian work exhibited at public galleries. Our regional members believe cuts to the Australia Council's grants will result in a contraction of the arts sector in regional Victoria.

- **Less ambitious programming**

Public galleries rely heavily on the Australia Council's project grants to develop new, innovative programming. In the past for example TarraWarra Museum of Art has received funding from the Australia Council to commission artists to create new work for its Biennial of Australian art. Less funding may put an end to an important aspect of this national platform for new, ambitious visual art.

- **Potential threat to regional exhibition touring**

Galleries in outer metropolitan and regional Victoria rely on high quality touring exhibitions provided by the NETS Australia network. NETS organisations, including NETS Victoria, face an uncertain future with the potential reduction in Key Organisations funding from the Australia Council. Any reduction in funding to NETS organisations will make it challenging for regional and outer-metropolitan galleries to deliver exhibitions to their audiences year-round.

- **Less creative regional communities**

The Creative Communities Partnerships Initiative will no longer be offered by the Australia Council following the budget cuts. This program has enabled regional galleries like Swan Hill Regional Art Gallery to work with regional artists and communities, develop innovative programs such as the ACRE on-farm residency program and engage new audiences. The ACRE project has been such a success it has been delivered nationally.

- **Blow to morale**

Furthermore, our members have told us this decision has dealt a severe blow to the morale of their staff and the communities they support. They would like greater investment in the arts to allow them innovate and change with the times to meet the needs of their communities.

**(b) the suitability and appropriateness of the establishment of a National Programme for Excellence in the Arts, to be administered by the Ministry for the Arts, with reference to:**

### **Australia Council**

It is very easy to critique the Australia Council's funding decisions as elitist when there is limited funding available relative to the size of the Australian arts industry. We believe the Australia Council's arms-length from government decision making and peer review assessment processes represent international best practice.

Under the leadership of Chair Rupert Myer OAM and CEO Tony Grybowski, the Australia Council recently set out a strategic plan for a "*Culturally Ambitious Nation*". This strategic plan creates pathways for *new* organisations to receive funding, provides stability for small to medium arts organisations through six year funding and places emphasis on supporting individual artists, in particular Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander arts organisations and artists.

It is disappointing that the Minister for the Arts has decided to reallocate \$104.8 million over four years from the Australia Council just as it was on the cusp of rolling out initiatives which would deliver on the Minister's aim of make funding available to a wider range of arts companies and arts practitioners.

### **National Program for Excellence in the Arts**

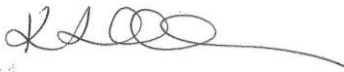
We support excellence in the arts. Accordingly, we see value in the establishment of a National Program for Excellence in the Arts which makes make funding available to a wider range of arts companies and arts practitioners than Australia Council funding can currently provide.

**We do not support the establishment of a National Programme for Excellence in the Arts at the expense of the Australia Council for the Arts.**

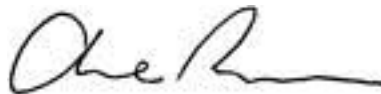
**We ask that:**

- the Australia Council funding be reinstated immediately;
- the Federal Government allocate additional funding to the Arts Budget to deliver the National Program for Excellence in the Arts; and
- the National Program for Excellence in the Arts program has assessment frameworks and reporting mechanisms which allow it to achieve the Arts Minister's aims of funding a broader range of arts and cultural activities by a wider range of arts companies and arts practitioners.

Yours sincerely



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PGAV President



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