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Committee Secretary
Senate Legal and Constitutional Affairs Committee

I write to you today regarding Senate Inquiry investigating the impact of the 2014 and 2015 Commonwealth Budget decisions on the Arts

For over forty years I have been a professional performing arts practitioner. I am the Managing Director of Boat Rocker Entertainment, which produces, presents, manages, markets and represents performing artists internationally. My company represents the international touring interests of Patch Theatre Company and Gravity & Other Myths, both of Adelaide, South Australia.

I also serve on the Board of Directors of International Performing Arts for Youth (IPAY), the premiere membership organization in the world today servicing and supporting the professional community of performing arts for young audiences.

I have personally been involved in bringing Australian arts companies to perform for tens of thousands of people in the United States, Canada, Japan, China, Korea, Argentina, Brazil, the United Kingdom, Russia, Japan, multiple members of the European Union, South Africa, Zimbabwe, and many other countries.

For many years, I have worked with the leadership and staff of Australia Council for the Arts and found their work processes and support of Australian performing artists exemplary. Without the guidance and financial support of Australia Council, exceptional Australian artists would not be able to bring their special form of creative ambassadorship to a global audience.

The cost of creating, developing and producing high quality live performing arts is great. The costs usually far exceed the income that can be generated by ticket sales. International travel costs only exacerbate that fact.

The benefits of bringing high quality performing arts to a global audience are manifest. In addition to the inherent cultural benefits, enabling Australia's fine artists to perform in other countries are one of the best forms of promoting Australian social values and talents.

It is therefore extremely important that governmental funding support be dispensed by an organization and by people who intimately understand the creative process and can make informed decisions regarding the relative value of the quality of the large number of talented artists and companies from which to choose as cultural ambassadors. The people at Australia Council are most qualified to perform this task.

In the sector of Theatre for Young Audiences, Australian companies like Patch, Slingsby, Windmill, Polyglot and Terrapin have for many years been attending the annual IPAY Showcase in the United States. Many of them have been invited to perform their full-length works for an audience that includes arts presenters from all over North America and an increasing number of presenters from other parts of the world. These Showcase performances have resulted in many engagements for these arts companies to tour America, Canada and elsewhere. It can take 2 to 3 years to complete the arrangements for these tours and develop new work and the community outreach programs that the Australian companies provide as a companion to their performances.

With the recent changes to funding mechanisms in Australia these arts companies are unable to plan for activities in the future, are unable to develop new work and without the proper funding will be unable to travel to the United States and elsewhere.

I urge you to allow Australia Council to continue the peerless work it has been doing for many years.

Respectfully,

Jim Weiner
Managing Director, Boat Rocker Entertainment
Board Member, International Performing Arts for Youth