

Submission re Inquiry into the impact of the 2014 and 2015 Commonwealth Budget decisions on the arts

This submission and attached documents is in support of senator Brandis' proposed new scheme for supporting excellence in the arts. I perceive this initiative as a necessary intervention in a sector dominated by nepotism and cronyism.

Australia Council's rhetorical embrace of "peer assessment" and principles of "arms length from government" are pure farce. In AC parlance, a "peer" is anyone whom the AC deems to be one and "arms length from government" is hardly a distant or objective relationship.

When cuts were made to ABC funding, administrative positions were shed---no programmes were cut. By contrast the AC immediately cancelled all funding programmes for artists in the small and independent sectors for the June 2015 applications for arts funding. This privileging of administrative infrastructure over the work of artists typifies "arts policy" as understood and practiced by the AC. In dance, the arena I am most familiar with, the AC supports the development of administrative peak bodies and other infrastructure "industries" that have become the tail that wags the dog. This infrastructure and its underpinning "policy" rationale have not produced a single Internationally significant choreographic artist since its inception. To justify its own overblown administration it wastes millions of tax dollars in development, touring and promotion of shoddy Australian merchandise-- like a department store in permanent "fire-sale" mode.

As a senior practicing artist and academic I care passionately about the arts in general and dance in particular. I believe that art and its relevance to society warrants more careful consideration than trite discussions about "vibrancy" or "excellence". I have lived in many different countries, taught in Universities in USA, Europe and Australia and danced with the world's most prestigious dance and ballet companies. As my CV clearly indicates, my criticism of the AC should not be dismissed as the gripes of a failed artist.

If I can be of further use to the senate in its deliberations, I would welcome the opportunity to discuss in person the issues raised in a polemical text (attached) that formed part of my PhD.

Sincerely,

Adjunct Professor Russell Dumas PhD.