

Senate Legal and Constitutional Affairs Committee
PO Box 6100
Parliament House
Canberra ACT 2600
legcon.sen@aph.gov.au

17 July 2015

Dear Sir/Madam,

Re: Impact of the 2014 and 2015 Commonwealth Budget decisions on the Arts

I am writing as an artist based in Adelaide working both independently and within arts organisations since graduating university in 2010. I am a choreographer, dancer, filmmaker, musician, producer, and curator and also run my own self-initiated arts business, The Mill Adelaide with co-Artistic Director, Amber Cronin. The Mill offers space for 35 resident artists as well as running an increasingly expanding dance and multidisciplinary arts program.

I have self-produced my own work across a range of disciplines and this work has been presented both nationally and internationally and has connected with the arts and wider communities in a range of contexts and levels. My work employs professionals from a diverse range of industries and most of the time the funding I receive to make this work is mainly redistributed elsewhere, feeding back the country's economy.

I am very concerned by the recent budget decisions that will threaten the entire small to medium and independent sector in the arts. I have been the recipient of a number of funding grants through the Australia Council, as well as other funding bodies, that have had a focus on supported emerging artists, or those that fall in the small to medium sector. These grants were pivotal in my professional development as a young artist and I would not have been able to get to where I am, working full-time in the arts, without this support. In particular, I received the Australia Council for the Art's JUMP Mentorship program, for the first time in 2011, as an emerging choreographer and the second time in 2014, as The Mill Adelaide.

I also received an Australia Council ArtStart grant in 2012, which like the JUMP Mentorship allowed me to develop a sustainable career in the arts. To hear that the ArtStart grant has been cut is a devastating blow. I have since mentored a number of artists younger than me with their successful applications to this program and have seen the unquestionable benefit in supporting emerging artists to be resourceful and supported as they begin their careers. They feed into the entire arts ecology and are who eventually become the directors and leading performers of companies.

These funding programs gave me the support I needed to make viable and sustainable career pathways. As an independent artist I do not have staff or support to assist with the business management side of my work. I am my own accountant, publicist, administrator, negotiator, producer, fundraiser and agent. The skills I developed as an artist made it possible for me to start my own business – The Mill – which despite being self-sustainable is now at risk, due to the potential impact that these budget decisions will have on the independent and small to medium sector.

The fact that the small to medium sector will be so negatively affected as a result of these funding cuts and redistribution alarms me. As much as I aspire to one day have my own company, or to work within some of the countries major arts organisations, it is the small to medium sector that holds the ecology together and provides pathways for artists at all stages of their careers to remain employed. It is this sector that feeds the major arts organisations.

I love and am proud of what I do. My choice to be an artist has not been an easy one and at times has been fraught with doubt, personal sacrifice and a great deal of hard work, much like any other professional field. However, I am driven by the belief that the arts, at all levels of excellence and scale, form a crucial part of our society. I am not sure what my future looks like if these cuts and redistribution of funds goes ahead. I am also concerned for the future of my country's artistic and therefore cultural identity and reputation. I urge you to reconsider the budget decisions.

Thank you for allowing me to express my views.

Yours sincerely,

Erin Fowler