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Legal and Constitutional Affairs Reference Committee
The Senate
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Dear Senators,

Thank you for the opportunity to participate in the inquiry into the impact of the 2014 and 2015 Commonwealth Budget decisions on the Arts.

About Ausdance

The Australian Dance Council – Ausdance National is Australia's peak body for dance: educating, inspiring and supporting the dance community in reaching its potential as a dynamic force within local, national and international communities. As part of a network of Ausdance organisations working across Australia we design and deliver accessible services and integrated programs to support dance in Australia. Ausdance is the local chapter of the World Dance Alliance facilitating a range of international connections and opportunities for local dance professionals. Ausdance is a member of ArtsPeak and the National Advocates for Arts Education, and facilitates the Tertiary Dance Council of Australia.

Ausdance, formed by dancers for dancers, has been a core partner and leader within the dance sector in Australia for nearly 40 years. As a network of offices and individuals working locally and nationally we have delivered forums, youth dance festivals, the Australian Dance Awards, ground-breaking research and information sharing, innovative partnerships, and worked to ensure dance in Australia is recognised as a vibrant and dynamic community.

Ausdance National has been in receipt of funding support via the Australia Council for the Arts since 1985, and we represent a wide selection of professional and community based dance practitioners who have also engaged with the Council over many years. As a key arts organisation, we had applied to be part of the six-year organisational support program that was cancelled following the 2015-16 Commonwealth Budget.

Dance in Australia

In 2013 702,000 Australians attended a performance, workshop, or school activity facilitated by a national dance organisation (Key Arts Organisation (KAO) or Major Performing Arts company (MPA)).¹ Australian dance continued to make a significant impact overseas,



reaching an international audience of 69,000 through 122 performancesⁱⁱ by KAOs and MPAs across Europe, South America and the Middle East. From a small amount of funding support our dance companies are engaging audiences, sharing Australian cultural experiences and supporting developing artists.

The arts broadly and the professional dance sector specifically contributes to the understanding of Australia's culture and international profile. 86 per cent of Australians attend at least one cultural or event in a yearⁱⁱⁱ, with local audiences for dance comparing favourably with other performing arts. Data collected via Playing Australia shows regional and remote audiences engaging with dance in high numbers despite a smaller number of opportunities.^{iv} In 2013 dance organisations supported by the Australia Council performed 56 new Australian works, with Major Performing Arts dance companies presenting an additional 22 new Australian works.^v

The Australian Bureau of Statistics reports the increasing participation by young people aged 5 to 14 in dance over the last decade. Between 2003 and 2012 participation rates increased across all age brackets for boys and girls; total participation in 2012 was 15 percent. More young people take part in dancing (outside of school hours) than in soccer, netball or Australian Rules Football.^{vi} Experiences in dance can provide the foundation for lifelong participation in healthy physical activity and it is through dance that individuals can find new ways of communicating ideas, learn about working creatively in teams, and understand and interpret more complex works of art.

However the significant changes brought about by the Commonwealth Budget 2015-16 have led to increased uncertainty and the curtailing of a number of programs across the professional dance sector. This uncertainty impacts across the full spectrum of dance practice; on audiences, community participants, education programs as well as the employment of professional artists and associated creatives, and ongoing artistic creation and development.

Inquiry into the impact of the 2014 and 2015 Commonwealth Budget decisions on the Arts

a. the impact of the 2014 and 2015 Commonwealth Budget decisions on the Arts;

Ausdance, along with other performing arts and live entertainment organisations, welcomed the 2013-14 Budget increases in financial commitment to unfunded excellence of the arts and other associated initiatives through the Australia Council. This funding was used to support the extension and collaboration of artists and art forms and the creation of new works, as well extending the research capacity of the Australia Council.

This additional support for 'unfunded excellence' enabled support for eight projects via the Dance Board across three categories supporting at least 184 participating artists (an example from one round delivered in late 2013). Yet despite additional funding across 2013, only 27 percent of project grants for creative development and presentation could be funded (table 1).

Project grants dance^{vii}	Requested	Approved	Unfunded
Creative Development	\$2,276,360	\$499,913 (22%)	\$1,776,447
Creative Presentation	\$1,364,726	\$471,604 (35%)	\$893,122



Even before the 2014 and 2015 reductions in funding, there was significant unmet demand for arts projects in Australia. The new approach to funding scoped by the Australia Council strategic plan launched in August 2014 was not given an opportunity to be implemented or reviewed, as the first round of funding was offered following the announcement of the 2014-15 Federal Budget.

The efficiency dividend continues to be applied to the Australia Council through the Federal Budget process. The Coalition's 2010 election statement recognised applying the efficiency dividend to the Australia Council has eroded the real value of grant funds available for the arts sector.^{viii} Without full indexation at least at a rate equivalent to the forecast CPI, Federal Government support for the sector has declined as funds are not able to meet increasing costs. For KAOs in the dance sector, this reduced indexation has resulted in tangible loss (table 2).

	2015	2014	2013	2012
Budget reported CPI	2.5%	2.25%	3.25%	2.75%
Received by KAOs	TBA – 0%?	0.55%	0.9%	0.07%

It is possible that due to the range and mix of cuts being experienced by the Australia Council, organisations in receipt of funding in 2015-16 are unlikely to receive any indexation.

The cuts experienced by the Australia Council through the efficiency dividend and the redirecting of funds to the Book Council and the NPEA has resulted in anxiety among many in the arts sector, and impacted on future plans.

Australian Dance Theatre

Australian Dance Theatre is one of Australia's pre-eminent contemporary dance companies and the longest running in the country. Formed 50 years ago, Australian Dance Theatre has pioneered work contributing to the defining of dance in this region. ADT is also one of Australia's most active touring dance companies, and has been recognised with three Australian Dance Awards for Outstanding Achievement by a Company.

Approximately 30 percent of our core grant is currently derived from the Dance Board of the Australia Council as part of a triennial agreement. This secured funding is crucial to the ongoing viability of the company, the creation of new work, including our ability to afford an ensemble of full time dancers, our studios and core staff.

While we appreciate that it appears ADT will be eligible to apply for project funding through the newly established NPEA, we do have concerns about significant gaps resulting from the recent shift of funding from the Australia Council to the Ministry for the Arts.

Almost one third of our existing core funding has effectively been cut from the end of 2016 when our current triennial with the Australia Council expires, and it appears there may be no secure multi year funding programs to replace this. It will therefore be enormously challenging for ADT to retain its already lean infrastructure.

This decline in core funding will be experienced by many other Australia Council key organisations and may effectively compromise the tier of companies, which for the most part, are those most recognised internationally. These companies are also most recognised for



extending the boundaries of the artforms, and generally developing the skill-sets of artists and artworkers to populate the industry more broadly.

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 particular reference to:

i. the effect on funding arrangements for:

- A. small to medium arts organisations,**
- B. individual artists,**
- C. young and emerging artists,**
- D. the Australia Council,**
- E. private sector funding of the arts, and**
- F. state and territory programs of support to the arts,**

There is significant concern the NPEA will not provide organisational or structural support, and the corresponding cuts at the Australia Council severely restrict the capacity of organisations to exist day to day.

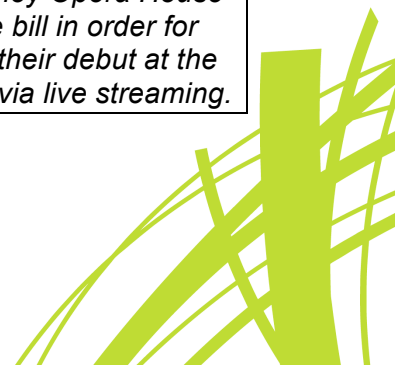
While MPA dance companies earn 73 percent of their income via box office and other non-government support, internal Australia Council reporting highlights the reliance small to medium companies have on government support to be able to deliver their creative output. In 2013, dance key organisations received 69 percent of all income from government sources, compared to 37 percent in music and 50 percent in theatre.^{ix}

Despite a recent increased focus on growing private sector funding by KAO dance companies, it remains only approximately \$1 million a year, spread across 13 organisations.^x While this focus has seen an increase on previous years (260 percent since 2008), private funding for the arts has predominately been directed at larger, more established arts organisations. Small to medium organisations need a growth in base capacity and ongoing stability to be able to harness such relationships.

Force Majeure

Force Majeure was established in 2002 and has since developed six major works, two collaborative works and a short film series. Australia Council and ArtsNSW support the company. The company has toured work to the prestigious Lyon Biennale de la Danse, Place des Arts Montreal, Dublin Theatre festival, the Seoul Performing Arts Festival and has received a range of major awards including two Australian Dance Awards for Outstanding Performance by a Company. Due to the changes in arts funding in Australia its plans for 2016 are being curtailed.

Plan for 2016: cut \$170K from our overall budget. This means five fewer independent artists will be employed and those that are on contracts will be offered shorter periods of engagement. One of our key partners is being 'defunded' as of Dec 31 2015. We are co-producing a work that will be presented for a three week season at the Sydney Opera House in 2016. If they cannot access funds elsewhere then we will have to foot the bill in order for seven of western Sydney's brightest and best street style dancers to make their debut at the Opera House, performing to over 5000 people and 20 000 school students via live streaming.



ii. protection of freedom of artistic expression and prevention of political influence,

A national funding body requires long-term vision for the sector, and experience in assessing applications over a period of time. We strongly support the centrality of peer assessment, and expert artform committees are fundamental to maintaining and growing each art form. In looking at changes to the Australia Council legislation in 2013 we expressed our support for the establishment of peer committees to assist in the grant allocations while allowing the establishment of a clear governance board. We were pleased to see the Australia Council continue to access sector leadership and knowledge in the assessing of grants.

iii. access to a diversity of quality arts and cultural experiences,

Touring

Work within the arts and performance sector has been undertaken in recent years to address current issues of complexity and the cost of national touring, however limited resources to date has meant solutions have not been able to be adequately implemented. Access for regional and remote areas of Australia, where opportunities to experience diverse works are already extremely limited, is under pressure. These pressures have been exacerbated, not alleviated, by the changes put forward in the Commonwealth Budget 2015. While the NPEA has a stated focus to support regional and international touring, the lack of surety around the ongoing sustainability of dance companies has meant plans for some 2016 and 2017 tours have been shelved, and development programs are being wound back. Education programs and partnerships that would have run alongside these tours, working with artists living in the regions, are now at risk.

Also, the changes to the Australian International Cultural Council within the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade announced through the December 2014 MYEFO have raised questions for the Australian professional dance community. The funding and grants program associated with the ICC had enabled many dance companies to reach audiences and establish lasting relationships internationally. In 2013-14 Australian dance companies engaged audiences in the Middle East and the USA (Shaun Parker and Co), Europe (Australian Dance Theatre, Lucy Guerin Inc), Latin America (Sydney Dance Company) and Asia (Expressions Dance Company, Chunky Move, Bangarra Dance Theatre). Independent artists also extended relationships and shared performances. The new Australia Council for the Arts strategic plan, launched by the Minister for the Arts and the Foreign Minister in August 2014 highlighted:

We export far fewer cultural goods and services than we import. We want to shift this balance and enable Australian arts to flourish overseas.

...while some barriers have been removed by new technology, vast distances and the high costs of travel can still prevent artists and arts companies from touring or collaborating within and beyond Australia^{xi}

The new approach led by the Ministry for Arts to advise the Government on international cultural diplomacy has not yet been fully articulated. The NPEA focus on international touring will only succeed if companies are stable and able to ensure quality productions are created and available into the future.



Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander artistic experiences^{xii}

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander dance artists have a unique position in Australia. Art plays a significant role in Indigenous life. It is not only a means of transfer of information but also an important source of self-esteem, energy, enthusiasm, pride and hope.

The Indigenous arts sector is a major economic contributor to the arts economy and responsible for some of Australia's most valuable and important works of art. The prominence of Indigenous art is due in part to the motivation and considerable effort of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander artists, who have played a major role in introducing both Australia and the rest of the world to Australia's Indigenous cultures. Art has been the most effective tool for building relationships and awareness between Indigenous people and the wider community.

In 2013-14, 737,000 international tourists engaged with Indigenous arts activities. Over this period more international tourists in Australia took part in Indigenous arts activities than went to wineries or organised sport. The most popular activities were viewing an Indigenous art, craft or cultural display and attending a dance or theatre performance.^{xiii}

Indigenous arts have had incredible success nationally and internationally. The dance sector is vibrant, with over 30 independent choreographers with bodies of work, 200 dance groups and an estimated 100,000 cultural dancers.^{xiv}

Within this abundant talent there are huge opportunities to have a more sustained and engaged national and international audience and market penetration. However we are concerned that proposed cuts to the Australia Council may impact on this sector, particularly the effectiveness of small to medium arts organisations and individuals, especially young people, who are developing their craft. Increased uncertainty of funding pathways, greater reporting or regulatory requirements through the NPEA and reduction in partnership opportunities as other organisations reduce programs will impact the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander arts community.

The Indigenous arts sector articulates that arts and culture cannot be separated: culture governs artistic practice. Communities determine excellence based on this model. The unique position of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander art and artists needs to be considered when determining what 'excellence' is and how funding support is accessed.

iv. the funding criteria and implementation processes to be applied to the program,

Ausdance will be providing feedback to the Ministry following the release of draft guidelines for the NPEA in July, 2015. We welcome the opportunity to review the guidelines in draft format, noting this new funding process exists under the Commonwealth Grants Rules and Guidelines and will need to be approved by the Finance Minister.

Initial concerns relating to the draft guidelines are centered on access and feedback of the Programme. With ongoing assessment it may be unclear to applicants when they have been deemed unsuccessful, or are able to re-submit. There is also a need for clarity on the reporting requirements and contract conditions associated with the grants. The Productivity Commission has stated:

the current regulatory framework for Not-for-Profits [estimated to be half of all arts organisations] is characterised by uncoordinated regimes at the Commonwealth and state/territory levels. Disparate reporting and other requirements add complexity and cost, especially for organisations operating in more than one jurisdiction.^{xv}



There is potential a single arts project could be supported by the Australia Council, the NPEA, as well as state and local governments at different stages in development and production. Organisations already concerned about reduced structural sustainability may find themselves faced with increased reporting requirements on reduced funding to continue creating and producing Australian art.

v. implications of any duplication of administration and resourcing, and

During the review of the Australia Council in 2012 we stated concern about the need for distinction between the work of the Australia Council and the now Ministry for the Arts. The Ministry's role should be redefined to make it clear it offers policy advice to the Minister and intervenes strategically where appropriate, rather than running and funding programs that overlap with the function of the Australia Council. We note while other departments (such as Health and Community Services) do fund their own programs, they do not have an alternative arm's length funding mechanism such as the Australia Council.

vi. any related matter.

Education and Employment

The Federal Government, through the reports of Creative Industries Innovation Centre, has recognised the benefits of ongoing arts studies for the creative economy. The 2013 report noted

[Creative] industries contribute more than \$90 billion to our economy annually in turnover, add more than \$45 billion to GDP and generate annual exports of \$3.2 billion.

In 2011 there were more than 600,000 people working in the creative industries in Australia and over 120,000 creative businesses.

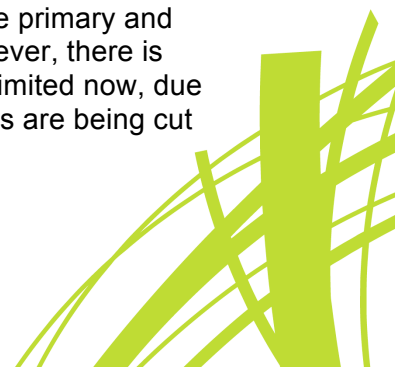
The 2011 strategy also noted:

Tertiary education is an important pathway to careers in creative industries or helping to develop creative employees for other industries.^{xvi}

In 2008-09, the creative industries made a larger contribution to GDP than a number of traditional industry groups, such as agriculture, forestry and fishing; electricity, gas, water and waste services; and accommodation and food services.^{xvii}

This strong and important area needs a thriving culture to continue to develop. Arts education across all levels and artforms is central to young people's cultural understanding, their ability to express ideas and to problem solve. It is the essential means to build skilful, knowledgeable, arts literate, articulate and confident generations. Research by agencies such as the Song Room and Professor Brian Caldwell clearly demonstrate the benefit of arts education across the school experience. High quality arts programs can result in higher attendance and engagement rates with the primary and secondary school systems, improved NAPLAN results (benefits of up to a year increase), as well as improved resilience across ages and cohorts.^{xviii}

It was anticipated there would be an increase in applications by students to continue arts based studies at university level, growing from increased engagement in the primary and secondary sectors as a result of the Australian Curriculum – The Arts. However, there is concern access to education programs and creative arts courses could be limited now, due to current funding reduction and uncertainty. Artists-in-Residences programs are being cut from the Australia Council as a direct result of the efficiency dividend.



In 2013, 74 percent of artistic and creative positions were permanent in dance KAOs and MPAs, compared with an average of 58 percent across all artforms.^{xix} Within the staffing profile 85 percent were artistic or production personnel. This stable employment is under threat without sustainable funding for organisations, and clear pathways of support for organisational structure. The flow-on impact of these changes on education, and subsequent employment opportunities, is not just an issue for the arts, but for creative industries and the economy as a whole.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide input regarding the ongoing funding and work of the Australian arts sector. Please contact us via arts@ausdance.org.au or by calling 1800 000 000 if you wish to discuss further the topics touched on in this submission. Ausdance would welcome the opportunity to participate in public hearings as part of this inquiry.

Kind regards,

Roslyn Dundas

CEO



References

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- ⁱⁱ Australia Council for the Arts *Dance regularly funded organisations: 2013 Snapshot* - internal reporting from 2013 data: Dance Key Arts Organisations and Major Performing Arts companies, 2014
- ⁱⁱⁱ Australian Bureau of Statistics *Attendance at Selected Cultural Venues and Events 2009-10*, Dec 2010
- ^{iv} Playing Australia, data from 2011 & 2012 Playing Australia acquittals (excluding Major Performing Arts organisations): average audience size per season of 240 for dance compared to 131 for theatre. Seasons requested through Playing Australia in Nov 2012 and March 2013: 102 for dance, 292 for theatre.
- ^v Australia Council for the Arts *Dance regularly funded organisations: 2013 Snapshot* - internal reporting from 2013 data: Dance Key Arts Organisations and Major Performing Arts companies, 2014
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- ^{vii} Australia Council for the Arts *Grants decisions for grants closing 8 Feb and 12 August*
<http://www.australiacouncil.gov.au/grants/grant-decisions#dance> accessed January 2014 – page no longer available
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- ^{xii} Ausdance acknowledges BlakDance for their contribution to this submission <<http://www.blakdance.org.au/>>
- ^{xiii} Australia Council for the Arts *Arts Nation; an arts overview of Australian Arts*, 2015
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