



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

15 July 2015

Dear Sir/Madam,

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

We here at Stompin are deeply concerned about the proposed funding cuts to the Australia Council and how this will impact on the Small to Medium Arts Sector. These cuts have the potential to drastically impact iconic Tasmanian Arts organisations like Stompin.

WHO WE ARE:

STOMPIN

Stompin creates an environment in which young people grow, as individuals and as citizens, through their connection with dance. Based in Launceston Tasmania we work with young people locally and nationally. We develop artists, audiences and community through creating and presenting unforgettable performance experiences. Unique to Australia, Stompin's performance culture unites non-professional dancers with professional artists to create and present signature works in ordinary and extraordinary places.

Stompin began in Launceston, in 1992 with the idea that when young people collaborate with professional artists, they can create inspiring, bold and relevant new dance work. Stompin involves young people in every aspect of our creative process from conception to realisation. Stompin shifts dance out of traditional performance venues and into atypical landscapes, introducing contemporary dance to a range of people previously unexposed to it. Stompin is unique because we work with young people in regional Tasmania, and this contributes significantly to Tasmanian, and therefore Australian, youth culture. Young people in Tasmania have limited opportunities to express their ideas through contemporary art. Stompin provides this opportunity through deep collaborative and professional processes. The triumph of the Stompin model is the high quality and relevant performance work we make with young Tasmanians, the number of participants, professional artists and audiences we constantly attract, our successful alumni and our strong organisational procedures developed over our twenty-three year history. We mentor the next generation of resourceful, flexible artists who are able to create and perform contemporary dance work in many different contexts. Stompin employs professional collaborators, often Stompin alumni, who work on our shows and mentor young people to develop the skills for life through their connection with dance.

Specifically our concerns are that:

- The arts sector stakeholders were not consulted with prior to this momentous change to National funding.
- The shift in funding from The Australia Council to NPEA comes just months into the implementation of the new Australia Council strategic plan that Senator Brandis publicly launched last August. This has resulted in the suspension of six year funding for small to medium companies (we submitted an application to this round that we invested over 30 hours in preparing) and suspension of the June Round of funding.
- NPEA will not provide multi-year operational funding for Small to Medium companies. There is now a real void that will be left by the re-allocation of these funds. Access to this funding was the backbone of regional arts companies.



- Almost all of Tasmania's arts industry is small to medium in size. This change has the potential to decimate the State's entire artistic output.
- Setting up two funding streams means a duplication of services. This is being reflected in is a loss of over \$20 million in the reallocated funds to go to the resourcing and delivery of NPEA.
- The arms length model of The Australia Council is being eroded by the creation of NPEA, a funding stream controlled directly by the Minister's office. This results in a real threat to artistic expression and opens arts funding up to the possibility of political influence.
- That this decision has a real impact on regional Tasmanian (and Australian) communities' ability to access diverse quality arts and cultural experience.

WHAT WE STAND TO LOSE

All core Stompin programs are at risk. This includes our yearly major work, Primary Stompin, The Stompin Youth Choreographic Project and Stompin in Schools, as well as all our community classes and workshops. Over the 2017 and 2018 periods this means projected jobs for over 30 Artists, dance experiences for 1200 participants, and connections with 2000 audience members.

In order to articulate the Stompin experience, and what has been placed at risk by these cuts to the Australia Council we have included some comments about Stompin by our artists, our dancers, and our audience members:

Artist Eleanor Bauer - Stompin Youth Choreographic Facilitator, 2013. Performer and performance-maker based in Brussels, Belgium:

With varied experience of teaching and performing worldwide, I have never encountered an environment or program quite like Stompin's. The participants are so diverse in age, levels of experience, and background, and yet they come together in an indivisible and mutually supportive manner. There is an overall attitude of passion, enthusiasm, and open-mindedness that fortifies each individual in his or her own unique trajectory. I was impressed by the general ability of all the participants in my solo choreography workshop, from age 13 to 29, to each engage in their own creative process and be able to articulate what is at stake within it. There are many places in the world where a young dancer can get formal training, but rarer and fewer are the schools or programs where a young dancer can have direct contact and practice with choreographic concepts and experience. At Stompin', the participants truly get creative training, becoming strong and confident artists, capable of expressing and crafting their ideas into pieces with integrity and care. I was touched by the way they worked together and each alone, displaying immense and unmitigated love for dance and for the community they form through that shared focus.

Audiences from our 2015 work 6000 to 1

- *What an enthralling experience. The stories conveyed with such respect, love, honesty and clarity. All of you so committed to the feeling of the show. A chance taken to come and see the show tonight will eventuate in many conversations with friends and families of those who saw the show. A chance to have deep conversations with those we love.*
- *Such a powerful use of music and movement to show emotional truths. I love it when art does that. Congrats guys it was an incredible piece of art. Will stay with me for a very long time.*
- *What you have created is so big. It does more than 'take the personal and make it universal'. It is transforming and explosive in its impact. The ripples will change our collective and individual worlds. Beyond moving.*

Dancers from our 2015 work 6000 to 1

- *This project has made me demand more from life. I now know how to make the choices that will make my life better.*



- *This has allowed me to have experiences that I never would have had if it weren't for Stompin. The lessons I've learnt will stay with me forever.*
- *Throughout the performance (6000 to 1) I felt a bond form between the audience and us and truly felt the idea of strength in community and the purity of human connection.*
- *It really gave me confidence in myself as a young artist and left me feeling like a career in the arts within Tasmania could actually be a real possibility and opportunity, not just a 'hope'.*

WHAT WE WANT:

- Return the funds to the Australia Council. Fund NPEA through other avenues.
- Increased funding to all areas of the arts in Australia.
- Investigate the potential of NPEA delivering funding Australia's Major Performing Arts Organisations - leaving the Australia Council to fund individual artists and the small to medium sector.
- The senate inquiry to come to Tasmania to speak directly with the sector about the issues that impact us.

Thank you for the opportunity to have our voice heard.

Yours sincerely,

Stompin says art/youth/community 4 ever
Emma Porteus / Artistic Director / Stompin