

Monday, 13 July 2015
369 Bronte Road
Bronte NSW 2024.

Committee Secretary
Senate Legal and Constitutional Affairs Committee
PO Box 6100
Parliament House
Canberra ACT 2600

To Whom It May Concern:

I have been and independent artist working in Australia, as a dancer and choreographer for the past 30 years. I am currently on an Australia Council Fellowship and working in Europe with fellow Australian dancer Paul White who is in the Pina Bausch company in Germany. Paul was awarded Germany's dancer of the year last year. Paul has only ever worked for small to medium company's in Australia during his career, and is now representing Australia at the top of his craft recognised internationally.

As an independent dancer and choreographer I have worked with smaller company's in Australia, but have also crossed over to dance with Bangarra, and choreograph for the Sydney Dance company and the Australian Ballet, all MPA Company's. I have also taught company class for the Sydney Dance Company and Bangarra for many years as have many independent dancers and choreographers. Its an ecology, we move between so called sectors, and we all work together.

Its interesting looking back through history, the voices that still speak today in the arts often struggled for recognition in their day. Stravinsky, Picasso, to just name a couple. I saw the Pina Bausch company in Germany last night, and the night before, to full packed houses and standing ovations. In her earlier days the company were booed with audience members walking out, as something new is often not embraced at the time. None of these artist would have been supported by the "National Program for the Excellence in the Arts" and we would not be able to celebrate them today. It seems clear to me that the Minister doesn't understand the process of the arts, and hasn't looked back thorough history.

It is the smaller companies in Australia that tour overseas and represent Australia by far the most. I recently saw a photo of Foreign Minister Julie Bishop watching a speech from Australian Dance Theatre's artistic director Garry Steward proudly in Paris after their performances. There were three Australia company's representing Australia in Paris that week: Australian Dance Theatre, Chunky Move and Stephanie Lake. Two key are Key Organisations and one Independent Artists, and all who will have their funding cut, and all in the category that Minister Brandis does not think important. These company's and artists in Australia are also the heart and soul of the

performing arts sector in Australia. I'm sure Minister Brandis has never seen the work of some of these smaller company's, but the 150 or so Key Organisations, and independent artists provide more jobs than the majors, play to bigger audiences, provide more diversity of artistic content, and are the only ones who bring the arts to the regional centres in Australia.

It is only our elite and wealthy that can afford to go and see the Major's performances. Its so classist, the average Australian also pay their tax's and would like to be able to afford to go to see performances at a lower more affordable cost, such as are provided by the small, medium, and independent sectors.

I trust the Minister will see the error of this proposed policy to cut the Australia Council funding, and not wreak havoc on an entire industry sector that was not considered when making this policy on the run.

Yours truly,

Narelle Benjamin