

Senate Standing Committee on Environment and Communications

Answers to Senate Estimates Questions on Notice

Budget Estimates May 2017

Communications Portfolio

Australia Council for the Arts

Question No: 188

Australia Council

Hansard Ref: Page 44, 25/05/2017

Topic: Cultural diplomacy

Senator Reynolds, Linda asked:

CHAIR: No, I haven't finished yet, but you will get the opportunity. One other issue is the issue of cultural diplomacy. Working with the West Australian Ballet and having a look at the fabulous program they did in Indonesia—front page of The Jakarta Post—it has just been an overwhelming diplomatic and cultural exchange. Now, having a look at how we can extend that, there are huge opportunities to bring Indonesian dancers and teachers down to Perth and have that exchange. Are you aware of what they have done?

Mr Grybowski: Absolutely.

CHAIR: In fact, you helped fund it, didn't you?

Mr Grybowski: The WA Ballet is one of the major performing arts companies, but all the companies and many of the small to medium companies have such a significant voice and presence overseas. It is often, obviously, funding dependent. We have done a lot of work in developing an international strategy and, again, offline, I am very happy to take you through that.

CHAIR: If you could—again, because I do not want to take up too much time now. Even on notice, looking at the way forward, just having a look at what the WA Ballet has done—and I know other companies in different arts also have—there is a great avenue to further develop that in terms of financial viability for some of the companies to extend overseas and look at other sources of revenue but also security and growth. If you could take that on notice—I have also raised it with DFAT, because I think there might be some opportunities for additional DFAT support and DFAT funding for cultural diplomacy.

Answer:

Under the *Australia Council Act 2013* (the Act) the Australia Council has a range of functions, including a responsibility to support and promote the development of markets and audiences for the arts. The Explanatory Memorandum to the Australia Council Bill 2013 notes that these functions reflect the Council's general purpose 'to support and promote vibrant and distinctively Australian creative arts practice that is recognised nationally and internationally as excellent in its field.'

Over the last 20 years, the Australia Council has supported artists and arts organisations to take up the creative, financial, and development benefits of international mobility. During this time the Australia Council has built strong relationships with many international partners, enabled long term engagement across key markets through financial support and developed networks for Australian artists. Our support of international arts activity builds audiences and markets for Australian arts overseas. This delivers clear economic outcomes as well as socio-cultural impacts in terms of nation-building, national identity and public diplomacy.

In 2015-16, we invested \$5.8m in international arts activity supporting 401 artists and organisations to work internationally through our grants and other funding programs. We also provided core funding to Major Performing Arts organisations – including \$770,000 to WA Ballet – and small-to-medium companies which may be used to support their international activity.

In addition to funding programs, Council delivers a range of initiatives to support international engagement by Australian artists. For example, in 2015-16:

- Our three International Development Managers managed over 1,000 requests from Australian artists and organisations seeking advice on international engagement.
- We offered 12 high quality international residencies, developing partnerships to provide market development and cultural exchange opportunities.
- We supported numerous incoming visitor programs, market platforms and outbound delegations to introduce international buyers to the Australian market, brokering relationships and developing understanding of Australian arts and creating opportunities for sales.