

16 July 2015

RE: Senate Inquiry Investigating the Impact of the 2014 and 2015  
Commonwealth Budget decisions on the ARTS

I have been an arts worker in the disability field for 30 years I started my first full time job in disability as an arts worker in 2009, when ARC Disability Services took an adventurous step and employed an arts worker to create an arts program within their organisation. This has led to partnerships with Tropical Arts Inc, an inclusive mainstream theatre company; with Kick Arts a mainstream visual arts organisation, with Trinity Bay High school dance students and with the Tanks Arts Centre. In this time, I have through my work won State and local awards for ARC Disability Services. In 2012 I won the Cairns Woman of the Year Award for my work.

My vision is to make ARC Disability Services, D'ArtZ program the major arts organisation for Far North Queensland region.

After completing three scoping studies in partnership with Arts Nexus and Access Arts to research the need for an arts and cultural service targeting people with a disability the result was a resounding yes.

All of my projects at ARC are grant driven and to date we have received local Cairns Council Regional Arts Development Fund grants and Arts Qld grants. ARC's core business is disability and this often excludes us from being in favour with arts funding guidelines.

Last year the Australia Council came to Cairns to update and explain the new funding guidelines for our industry. For the first time an organisation whose core business is disability but with a strong commitment to an arts program that creates professional, inclusive theatre and a ten year track record would be eligible to apply for organisational funding.

ARC D'ArtZ program has created such an excitement in our community with our drummers getting professional gigs, our actors creating professional theatre (Doug Robbins) with Tropical Arts pathways into mainstream performance, with Kick Arts gallery exhibition. We are well on our way to creating a professional level of art experiences for audiences to enjoy.

This started a process of communication and hard work to put together a submission to apply to the Australia Council. It is a long and precise process, often done outside work hours.

The overriding impact of funding changes and the consequence it has on my work means that 6 months work is wasted, we now have even fewer options for funding and have to compete for an even smaller pot of money. I do not know how our outstanding and excellent services will be able to compete to grow and prosper in a professional manner.

My question is –How do we as a regional organisation whose core business is disability and arts go to for key organisational funding? Where do we fit in this new Ministerial direction?

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