

Submission on the Impact of the 2014 and 2015 Commonwealth Budget decisions on the Arts

To the Committee,

I have worked as an independent artist in Australia for the past eight years. In this time I have performed at Big West Festival, La Mama Theatre, Melbourne Fringe Festival, Brisbane Festival, Footscray Community Arts Centre, Malthouse Theatre, Melbourne Theatre Company, Theatre Works, Newport Substation plus many regional venues around Victoria.

I have collaborated with independent artists such as Tamara Saulwick, Vanessa Chapple, Glynis Angell, Mike McEvoy, Roslyn Oades, Nicola Gunn and Geoff Pinfield on projects that have been innovative, won awards and played to sold out audiences.

All of these ventures were in some way supported by Australia Council or local body funding. Being part of a diverse range of projects has enabled me to make a living as a practicing artist and contribute to the artistic landscape of Australia. I have done this mostly within the small-to-medium and independent sector.

The recent funding cuts to the Australia Council will impact dramatically on my ability to support myself as an independent artist.

With less money for the Australia Council to distribute, less money will go to the small-to-medium companies and independent artists. The larger companies will be competing for a smaller pool of funds, which will lessen the likelihood that independent projects are funded. As this makes up over 50% of my income, I would be forced out of the arts and into another field altogether, impeding my ability to grow and contribute to the arts in Australia.

Independent artists and small-to-medium companies are the breeding ground for new talent and new ideas. Their ideas are more agile, more experimental and more innovative. Larger companies are indeed influenced by this sector. Without them, we have a top-heavy ecology that will not be dynamic or innovative.

These cuts destroy not only the careers of our independent artists, but the variety of work our audiences are exposed to, giving them less to choose from and engage with. It will only weaken arts and culture in Australia.

My career as an artist is at stake. I implore the government to reverse the cuts and restore the funding to the Australia Council.

Yours Sincerely,

Rachael Dyson-McGregor