

To the Legal and Constitutional Affairs References Committee for inquiry and report regarding the inquiry into the impact of the 2014 and 2015 Commonwealth Budget decisions on the Arts.

I am a South Australian visual artist and am writing to record how my career has benefited and grown from access to small contemporary institutions who are at risk now due to funding cuts to the Australia Council. I have been funded by ArtsSA many times, funded through NAVA, been the recipient of a Freedman Foundation Scholarship, Ian Potter Foundation travelling scholarship and an Anne and Gordon Samstag Scholarship. My work has been produced and shown all around the world, most recently in Lithuania, Spain and London and I currently reside in Spain. I have never been the recipient of Australia Council funding despite many applications. I can understand that Minister Brandis has heard some voices of discontent with the Australia Council and it's bias towards the eastern states, that is certainly true in my experience, as is the conservatism sometimes evident in Australia Council decisions. Yes Minister Brandis you are right, there are people who think, feel and say that, I am one of them. However, helping to improve those issues will not be achieved through cutting the meagre amounts of funding going to artists and small institutions and instating your new scheme.

My first major solo exhibition was at the Australian Experimental Art Foundation in 2003. I have shown at the CACSA, PICA, 24 HR art, Artspace, and Gertrude St gallery spaces as well as artist run initiatives such as Bus, Westspace, Loose Projects, Felt Space and of course Downtown Art Space in Adelaide which, alongside four other young artists started and ran for five years. All of these spaces received Australia Council funding and have been the bedrock of my career and crucial to my development as a young artist. My work has been written about in (and I have written for) Eyeline magazine, Broadsheet, Artlink , Art monthly, RealTime and Un magazine. Without these types of CAOS galleries, Artist Run Initiatives and journals most contemporary art in Australia will grind to a halt.

I urge you to reconsider the cuts to arts funding and the redistribution of arts funding in Australia. The arts sector makes up a tiny portion of government budget but is of vital importance to the thousands of people employed by small to medium arts organizations and to artists. I was born on Kangaroo Island and grew up in the rural town of Strathalbyn, my parents are not wealthy, they cannot support my art practice through private means. If people from rural areas and people from working class backgrounds do not receive support, there will be no diversity of artists in Australia. Access to the arts and culture, whether it is as makers, thinkers, audience and critics for all Australians regardless of socio-economic status should be the goal of Arts policy.

Yours Sincerely

Bridget Currie