

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

26 June 2015

Dear Committee Secretary,

I wish to register my strong opposition to the cuts to the Australia Council.

I am writing to express my deep dismay and concern at the impact of the 2014 and 2015 Commonwealth Budget decisions on the Arts. I am an independent arts practitioner in the areas of Poetry (6 full length published books including a winner of *The Thomas Shapcott Prize*) and Visual Art (works in both National and International Public Collections), editor of the long-running and respected poetry journal *foam:e* and publisher of high quality print and poetry collaborations under the imprint *Light-Trap Press*.

Early in my career I received both an Australia Council Literature Residency (an area drastically affected by recent Commonwealth Government's budget decisions) and a Visual Arts and Craft Strategy (VACS) grant, a joint initiative of the federal, state and territory governments which aims to build a strong, sustainable and dynamic visual arts sector. I can say with certainty that both had a huge impact on me as an early career writer and artist in granting possibilities that have come to fruition in export sales of fine-press books to the prestigious collections of Victoria & Albert Museum and The British Library, and invitations to publish with Vagabond Press in Sydney and Shearsman Books UK.

Without this nurturing developed from the residency and grant at the beginning of my career giving confidence, contacts and expertise I would not have been able to contribute as much to the Arts economy or be in a position to give opportunities to others, by curating the Australian leg of the international touring exhibition *OpenBooks+*.

I am also deeply concerned that the Australia Council's overarching guiding principle of support of artistic excellence through the arm's length, peer review of grants to artists and arts organisations is being replaced in the case of the National Programme for Excellence in the Arts by Ministerial prerogative which appears to favour large established organisations rather than The Australia Council's developing and fostering of 'excellence' amongst small to medium arts organisations and individual artists (including young and emerging artists).

It is precisely the early career support given by residencies and project grants to individuals that that nurtures potential and creates future financial opportunities and allows for self-sustainment in the Arts Sector. At the 2011 Census there were approximately 310,723 persons whose main job in the week prior to Census night was in a cultural occupation. This is an incredibly important sector of the Australian economy and as such should be encouraged through the Australia Council and state and territory programs of support to the arts to increase the diversity and reach of quality arts and cultural experiences to all sectors of the community.

I do not believe that cutting Arts funding or diverting it by the introduction of a National Programme for Excellence in the Arts will grow this sector of the economy in the same way that arm's length, peer review grants to individual artists and small to medium arts organisations will have. The Visual Arts and Craft Strategy (VACS) Evaluation Report published by the Council, demonstrates the extraordinary multiplier effect of government arts investment when directed to developing and fostering 'excellence' amongst small to medium arts organisations and individual artists (including young and emerging artists).

Please note that I am also a Finance, Analysis and Planning Manager at a G08 University therefore my comments on the economics of the sector are not just first-hand experience but may be considered an informed opinion.