

**Senate Standing Committee on Environment and Communications**  
**Answers to Senate Estimates Questions on Notice**  
**Supplementary Budget Estimates Hearings October 2016**  
**Communications Portfolio**  
**Department of Communications and the Arts**

**Question No: 46**

**Program 2.1**

**Hansard Ref: Written, 28/10/2016**

**Topic: Senate report response and implementation**

**Senator Bilyk, Catryna asked:**

In May 2016 the Government provided a response to the Senate Legal and Constitutional Affairs References Committee Report: Impact of the 2014 and 2015 Commonwealth budget decisions on the Arts. Not all recommendations in that report were accepted. In relation to each recommendation that was not accepted in full, why was the full recommendation not accepted?

- (a) What advice was provided by the Department to the Minister on the report?
- (b) Has the report been taken into account in the management of the Catalyst program?
- (c) Provide an update on the implementation of the Government's response to each item in the report that was accepted, item by item?

**Answer:**

- (a) The Department advised the Minister regarding the process for tabling of the Government's response to the Report.
- (b) Yes.
- (c) The Australian Government's response to the to the Senate Inquiry into the *Impact of the 2014 and 2015 Commonwealth Budget decisions on the arts* is available at [http://www.aph.gov.au/Parliamentary Business/Committees/Senate/Legal and Constitutional Affairs/Arts Funding](http://www.aph.gov.au/Parliamentary_Business/Committees/Senate/Legal_and_Constitutional_Affairs/Arts_Funding)

The following table provides an update on the implementation of items agreed to by the Government.

<b>Recommendation 1</b>	
The committee recommends that the government develop and articulate, in consultation with the arts sector, a coherent and clear arts policy, including priorities for arts funding supported by evidence-based analysis, and greater clarity about the respective roles of the Ministry for the Arts and the Australia Council, as well as the other statutory arts bodies.	
<u>Govt response</u>	<u>Action</u>
Agreed in part.	Interagency consultation and the policy development process is ongoing.

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**Recommendation 2**

The committee recommends that the Commonwealth government restore to the Australia Council the full amount of funds diverted from it in the 2014 MYEFO and 2015 Budget, ensuring it has the level of resourcing identified as necessary to implement in full its 2014 strategic plan over the current financial year and the four-year forward estimates.

Govt response

Action

Agreed in part.

The government repurposed \$8 million a year over four years (2015–16 to 2018–19) to the Australia Council.

Implementation complete.

**Recommendation 4**

The committee recommends that, should the Catalyst fund proceed, the Ministry for the Arts further develop and clarify how the Catalyst fund will:

- complement (and not duplicate) the role of the Australia Council;
- ensure small-to-medium organisations will be prioritised, whether through
- a quota or some similar system; and
- ensure the spread of funds across the year, given that the funding program exists on a first-in-first-served basis.

Govt response

Action

Agreed.

Catalyst assessments are carried out on an ongoing basis, usually in the order in which applications are received, with funding assessment recommendations ordinarily made on a quarterly basis.

To date, Catalyst has provided funding to 144 projects, of which 116 are delivered by small to medium organisations.

Implementation complete.

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**Recommendation 7**

The committee recommends that the Ministry for the Arts work with the Australia Council, the state and territory governments and the arts sector to develop and implement streamlined and coordinated grants processes and timelines, to the greatest extent possible, in order to minimise the administrative burden on applicants seeking funding from different bodies and programs.

Govt response

Action

Agreed.

Consultation between the Department, the Australia Council and state and territory governments is ongoing.

Implementation ongoing.

**Recommendation 8**

The committee recommends that the Australia Council give careful consideration to how it may particularly prioritise support to individual artists in its funding programs, in recognition of their exclusion from the Catalyst fund.

Govt response

Action

Agreed.

In 2015-16, the Australia Council provided funding of \$14.6 million through its grants program, strategic activity and government initiatives to support 716 individual artists and groups of artists.

Implementation ongoing.

**Recommendation 9**

The committee recommends that the Australia Council give consideration to the viability of re-launching a specific program for the development of early career individual artists, along the lines of the highly successful ArtStart program which was abandoned following the 2015 Budget.

Govt response

Action

Agreed in part.

Individual early career artists are eligible to apply through the Australia Council's development grant category for career development support, acknowledging that the competition for these funds is high.

Implementation complete.

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**Recommendation 10**

The committee recommends that, without compromising principles of qualitative and merit-based assessment, the Ministry for the Arts, the Australia Council and other funding bodies continue to work with the states and territories toward increased equity in arts funding between the states and territories, and between urban, regional, rural and remote communities.

Govt response

Action

Agreed.

Interagency communication regarding arts funding is ongoing.

Implementation complete.

**Recommendation 11**

The committee recommends that the government and the Council continue ensuring that support for Australia's arts takes full advantage of the spectacular diversity of our artists and audiences, and that the diversity of Australian artists and people is included and represented in decisions about arts funding, including on assessment panels.

Govt response

Action

Agreed.

The register of assessors, including those of the Australia Council and the Department have representation from a diverse range of people including Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders, individuals from cultural and linguistically diverse backgrounds and people with disability.

Implementation complete.