Question No: 47

Program 2.1

Hansard Ref: Written, 01/11/2016

Topic: Catalyst Program

Senator Bilyk, Catryna asked:

1. How many applications have been received in each year of the program and how many applications and how much funding has been approved in each year of the program, breaking that down year by year for multi-year funding approvals?

2. The available funding in the program is stated to be "up to $12 million in each year". Has more than $12 million been made available in any year of the program? If so, how much was approved in excess of $12 million and why was more than $12 million approved in any year and when was the funding approved?

3. What percentage of recipients from the Catalyst program has also received funding in the past from the Australia Council?

4. There have been media reports (Daily Review 5 October 2016; Arts Hub 5 October 2016) that the Minister is planning to return all or most of the funding taken from the Australia Council's budget in 2015 for this program. Is this correct?

5. If the funding taken from the Australia Council in 2015 is to be returned, what portion of funding is available to return and will all funding cuts to the arts sector be reinstated?

6. If the Catalyst program is to continue beyond the current year, for how many years will it continue and are there any plans to change it in any way?

7. When will the Catalyst program as a whole be evaluated?

8. How many assessors have been used from the people on the independent register?

9. Have any assessors been added or deleted from the register during 2016? If so, why?

10. How much money has been expended and committed in assessor fees since the inception of the program?

11. Has the list of priority regions been decided? How were the priority regions chosen? When will they be made available publically?

12. How does the Catalyst program complement other support programs, including Australia Council and Creative Partnerships Australia?

13. What steps have been put in place to ensure that there is no duplication across any funding programs?

14. Provide a list of all applications approved for funding under the program from its inception?

15. In relation to each approved application, provide the following information:

(a) How does the project meet the guidelines of the program?

(b) How was the application assessed?

(c) How was each application presented to the Minister?

(d) Did the Minister select the highest ranked projects?

(e) What is the breakdown of these applications across each state/territory in Australia?

(f) What evaluation of each application will be made when it is completed?

(g) How many other applications were received in the same round and what percentages were funded/rejected?

16. For each rejected application, what were the reasons for the rejection?

Answer:

1. Catalyst received 508 applications in 2015-16. To date, in 2016-17, Catalyst has received 158 applications.

   The funding committed to Catalyst and the number of applications funded are in the table below:

	2015-16	2016-17	2017-18	2018-19	2019-20
Catalyst Budget (millions)	$11.9	$11.8	$12.0	$12.2	$12.5
Funds committed	$11.9	$6.2	$4.6	$2.4	$1.1
Applications approved for funding	125	19	N/A	N/A	N/A

2. No.

3. To date, 14 (9.7%) of the 144 projects funded have stated that they will also receive funding from the Australia Council for different elements of the project.

4. No.

5. Not applicable.

6. Catalyst is an ongoing initiative.

7. In June 2016, the department had the Catalyst program independently audited by RSM Australia. The audit found that: the governance structures for Catalyst had been developed to a high standard; the controls have been designed in line with key better practice principles; and that the grants management system resulted in a significant reduction in human error and delivered transparent and defensible decision making.

8. To date 75 independent assessors have been used to assess Catalyst applications.

9. Forty-six independent assessors were added to the Register in 2016. One independent assessor has been removed from the Register at their request.

10. $49,270 has been spent on independent assessors since Catalyst began in November 2015.

11. Catalyst places priority on all regional areas across Australia – there are no specific target areas. However, as per the Catalyst guidelines, priority countries or overseas regions are available on the Department's website https://www.arts.gov.au/funding-and-support/catalyst-australian-arts-and-culture-fund. These priority countries have been selected to support recent government-level agreements that have been made to facilitate cooperation in the fields of art and culture.

12. The Department of Communications and the Arts works closely with the Australia Council, Creative Partnerships Australia, the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade and other agencies to ensure that support for arts and cultural activities is consistent and integrated across government.

13. Catalyst largely provides funding to projects, or components of projects, that would not be funded by other funding sources. Catalyst emphasises project funding for small to medium organisations and for regional areas. Catalyst aims to encourage innovation and participation across Australia, support cultural diplomacy, and promote partnerships and the leveraging of private sector support.

    The Catalyst application process requires applicants to declare funding that has been or will be received from other sources. In addition, applications are cross-checked by the department with other Australian Government funding programs across the Arts portfolio to ensure there is no funding duplication.

14. The list is publically available on the Department of Communications and the Arts website at https://www.arts.gov.au/funding-and-support/catalyst-australian-arts-and-culture-fund

15.

    (a) Catalyst funding is delivered through three streams: partnerships and collaborations; innovation and participation; and international and cultural diplomacy. Each application must meet the criteria for at least one of these funding streams. Funding is only provided to projects that meet the funding criteria that are ranked highly by the assessment process.

    (b) The assessment process is described in the Catalyst guidelines are publically available on the Department of Communications and the Arts website at https://www.arts.gov.au/funding-and-support/catalyst-australian-arts-and-culture-fund

    In summary, all applications are assessed by at least three assessors including a combination of independent and departmental assessors. Applications are assessed rigorously against the assessment criteria. The Minister approves funding based on the assessment of independent assessors and departmental staff. Recommendations are based on the merit of the project, the merit of the application and the capacity of the organisation to deliver the project. Recommendations also take into consideration the overall spread of funding across art-forms, organisational size and the geographical spread of projects and activities as stated in the Catalyst objectives.

This approach is consistent with the Commonwealth Grants Rules and Guidelines and standard practice in arts funding programs administered by the state and territory governments.

(c) The Minister is provided with a written Brief that summarises applications, funding recommendations and the impact on the budget over the current year and the forward estimates.

(d) The Minister approves funding based on the recommendations of the Department. The Minister has accepted all recommendations made to him through this process.

(e) The table below shows the breakdown of applications funded across states and territories.

State/Territory	Total Approved	Percentage of all applications funded
ACT	8	6%
NSW	48	33%
NT	6	4%
QLD	13	9%
SA	15	10%
TAS	6	4%
VIC	36	25%
WA	12	8%
Total	**144**	**100%**

(f) All funding recipients are required to provide a final report to the show how their Catalyst funding was expended and their project objectives were met. If accepted by the Department, the contract is acquitted.

(g) To date, 630 applications have been assessed which has resulted in funding to 144 (23%) applications.

16. To respond to this question would require an unreasonable diversion of resources.