

SENATE STANDING COMMITTEE ON LEGAL AND CONSTITUTIONAL AFFAIRS
ATTORNEY-GENERAL'S PORTFOLIO

Group: 2

Program: Other Agency

Question No. BE15/068

Senator Collins asked the following written question from the 27 and 28 May 2015 hearing:

1. Goal 4 of the Council's Strategic Plan is to cherish Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander arts and cultures. What is meant by the word cherish in this context?
2. How are Aboriginal arts and cultures being embedded, to use another of the Plan's terms, in the Council's assessment and promotional activities?
3. Please provide an organisation chart of the Council, going below the level of the Board and the Executive, which is all that appears on the website. In other words, what are the Arts Practice and Strategy Panels, and who chairs them?
4. Is there a separate Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Unit within the Council? What is the process for it influencing decisions across all art forms, in other words embedding Aboriginal arts and culture?
5. What are the criteria used for assessing the extent of Aboriginal arts and culture in applications for funding?
6. More generally, is diversity a factor in assessing applications? Goal 2 aims to "fuel diverse practice from artists of different backgrounds". Does this include Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures? What are the criteria for the assessment of diversity? Are they published anywhere? Are applicants required to provide evidence of diversity in their applications?
7. Where research into Aboriginal arts and culture is a part of an application, what ethical oversight is required for that research?

The answer to the honourable senator's question is as follows:

1. *Cherish* is to be understood in the context of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander arts and culture being treasured, experienced and valued by all, nationally and internationally. This includes arts audiences, communities and the general public, both Indigenous and non-Indigenous.
2. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander arts and cultures are embedded in the Australia Council's peer assessment structure as follows: The Australia Council has a pool of 649 artistic peers to draw on when forming assessment panels. This pool includes 53 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peers which is 8% of the pool. In the first round of the new grants program, 46 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peers participated in the assessment process. This represented 20% of the total number of peers who participated on assessment panels across all practice areas.

Under the Australia Council's new grants model, applicants can select the practice area of the panel of peers they would like to assess their application. There are 12 arts practice areas including each of the art forms as well as Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Arts, Arts and Disability and Multi-art form. Only Indigenous grant applicants can apply to the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Arts Grant Assessment Panel which is a multi-art form panel

composed of up to nine Indigenous peers from each state and territory including the Torres Strait Islands.

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander arts and cultures are also embedded through a range of Australia Council promotional activities, including:

- key Council events, such as the annual Australia Council Awards and National Indigenous Arts Awards;
- public forums and sector engagement activities on Australia Council funding and the cultural ambitions of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander artists and organisations.
- the promotion of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander arts and cultures through national and international market development initiatives such as the Australian Performing Arts Market, Asia Pacific Triennial of Contemporary Art and Australasian World Music Expo;
- publications and marketing – for example, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander arts and cultures are featured on the Australia Council’s website and in print publications.

3. The Australia Council organisation chart is attached. The chart includes the names of the Chairs of Arts Practice and the Chairs and members of the Strategy Panels.

The Strategy Panels and Chairs of Arts Practice provide objective, expert advice to the Australia Council on arts sector issues. The Panels and Chairs are an important avenue through which the Australia Council maintains direct engagement and ongoing dialogue with the arts sector. There are nine Chairs of Arts Practice and three Strategy Panels: Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Arts Panel; Major Performing Arts Panel; and Research Strategy. The Panels are appointed by the Australia Council Board.

Please note that the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Arts Strategy Panel is a different panel in both composition and function to the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Grant Assessment Panel referred to in response to part 2 of this Question on Notice.

4. The Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Arts unit within the Australia Council is in the division of the Office of the Chief Executive Officer. The unit consists of five staff, three of whom are Indigenous, including the Executive Director. The unit is responsible for engaging across the Australia Council on all areas of organisational performance that impact the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander arts sector and industry. The Executive Director of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Arts is a member of the Australia Council senior executive team, responsible for implementing, monitoring and evaluating strategic activity across the organisation. The Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Arts unit is responsible for monitoring programs, service delivery and performance for efficient, effective and relevant outcomes to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander clients, the arts sector and industry as well as managing projects in coordination with all other units covering planning, implementation, reviewing and evaluating.

In addition to the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander arts unit, an Indigenous Market Development function sits within the Arts Strategy Division to develop and strengthen national markets for Indigenous artists and arts organisations to support the long term growth of audiences and markets for Indigenous contemporary arts.

5. The Australia Council’s new grants program has been designed so that peers assess applications against how the projects will contribute towards delivering the Australia

Council's Strategic Plan. Goal Four of the Australia Council's Strategic Plan is 'Australians cherish Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander arts and culture'. The three criteria are:

1. Artistic merit.
2. Viability (where projects involve working with diverse audiences or communities, peers will look for demonstrated cultural competencies and appropriateness).
3. One of four criteria aligned with the goals of the Australia Council's Strategic Plan. Applicants choose which of the four criteria to address based on what best reflects the primary outcome of their project:
 - The creation of new work.
 - Audience engagement (peers may consider how the proposed activity may increase Australians' experience of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander arts and culture).
 - Access to and participation in the arts (peers may consider how the proposed activity may increase Australians' experience of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander arts and culture).
 - The international profile of Australian arts.

These criteria are published on the Australia Council website.

6. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures are included within goal two of the Australia Council's Strategic Plan which is 'Australia is known for its great art and artists' with one of the objectives being to 'fuel diverse practice from artists of many different backgrounds'. Goal two is supported through the Australia Council's Cultural Engagement Framework, the grants criteria and the composition of the peer assessment panels.

The Australia Council's Cultural Engagement Framework is focussed on engaging with and promoting opportunities for:

- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.
- Artists with disability.
- Culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) communities.
- Young people.
- Regional communities.

The assessment criteria for the Australia Council's new grants program is outlined in response to part 5 of this Question on Notice. These criteria are published on the Australia Council website. Consideration of diversity is incorporated into the criteria as follows:

- Under the 'viability' criteria peers will look for demonstrated cultural competencies and appropriateness where projects involve working with diverse audiences or communities.

Diversity is also a factor in the assessment of applications against two of the elective criteria:

- Audience engagement (peers may consider how the proposed activity may increase or diversify audiences).
- Access to and participation in the arts (peers may consider how the proposed activity may increase participation in arts and culture, particularly among diverse groups and regional/remote communities).

The Australia Council's pool of peers reflects the diversity of Australia's population and the arts sector. 169 peers from all states and territories were used to form peer assessment panels

to review applications under the first round of the Council's new grants model. Of these 20% are Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander, 20% are from Culturally and Linguistically Diverse backgrounds, 5% are artists or arts workers with disability, and 28% are from regional Australia.

As a condition of applying to the Australia Council for funding, all applicants are required to indicate awareness of and adherence to the Australia Council's Indigenous protocol guides.

7. Arts practice based research is one of a range of activities that can form part of an application for arts project grants. This is with reference to the creative research and development process rather than formal academic research. Adherence to the Australia Council's Indigenous protocol guides applies to creative research and development. In instances where the Australia Council would consider supporting projects including formal research as a component, the researcher(s) or research institution(s) would be required to comply with the Australian Code for Responsible Conduct of Research (2007) developed by the National Health and Medical Research Council, the Australian Research Council and Universities Australia, as well as with the Guidelines for Ethical Research in Australian Indigenous Studies (2012) developed by the Austral