

From the office of the
CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER



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AUSTRALIA COUNCIL
372 Elizabeth Street, Surry Hills
Sydney NSW 2010 Australia
Postal Address
PO Box 788
Strawberry Hills NSW 2012
Telephone 61-02-9215-9000
Toll-free (1800) 22 6912
Fax 61-02-9215-9111
ABN 38 392 626 187

24 August 2004

Mr Jonathon Curtis
Committee Secretary
Select Committee on the Administration of Indigenous Affairs
Parliament House
CANBERRA ACT 2600

Dear Mr Curtis

Thank you for your letter to David Gonski, Chair of the Australia Council, regarding input to the Senate Select Committee on the Administration of Indigenous Affairs. I am replying on Mr Gonski's behalf.

The Australia Council has administered Indigenous programs for over thirty years and is pleased to have the opportunity to provide input to the Committee. Our submission is enclosed.

If you have any questions about the attached, please contact Mr Ray Kelly, Director, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Arts, on 02 9215.9070, or r.kelly@ozco.gov.au.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Jennifer Bont', written over a circular stamp.

JENNIFER BONT
Chief Executive Officer

Select Committee on the Administration of Indigenous Affairs The Australia Council and administration of Indigenous Programs

Introduction

The Australia Council is the Australian Government's arts funding and advisory body. It directly supports young, emerging and established artists, as well as new and established organisations.

The Council provides over 1700 investments each year to artists and arts organisations across the country in the fields of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander arts, community cultural development, dance, literature, music, new media arts, theatre and visual arts/craft.

Australia's major performing arts companies, including Bangarra Dance Theatre, are supported through funding partnerships with the Australia Council and the state governments. In addition, the Australia Council supports strategies to develop new audiences for the arts, as well as new markets both here and internationally.

The Council also conducts arts research and policy development, and regularly advises governments and industry on issues affecting Australian artists, such as taxation, copyright and insurance.

The Australia Council was formed as an interim Council in 1973 and was given statutory authority by the Australia Council Act 1975. It replaced an earlier body called the Australian Council for the Arts which was established in 1968 as a division of the Prime Minister's Department.

Under the Government's new arrangements for Indigenous affairs, a Ministerial Taskforce on Indigenous Affairs, chaired by the Minister for Immigration and Multicultural and Indigenous Affairs, is providing policy direction, coordination and establishing priorities for resource allocation. A Secretaries' Group on Indigenous Affairs supports the Ministerial Taskforce. The Government will also appoint non-statutory National Indigenous Council.

The Ministerial Taskforce has three priority areas for further policy development and potential investment:

- early childhood intervention, improving primary health and improving early educational outcomes;
- safer communities (including issues of authority, governance and law); and
- reducing dependency on passive welfare and boosting employment and economic development.

The National Government unit responsible for Broadcasting, Arts and Culture, Languages, Intellectual Property (IP) and Repatriation (of cultural artifacts and human remains etc) has moved from Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Services (ATSIS) to the Department of Communications Information Technology and the Arts (DCITA). We are in almost daily liaison with Department staff to support this process of transition. Mark Stapleton Unit Manager has joined a Portfolio Indigenous Affairs Network as contact officer for the Council.

We have offered to support the 22 Indigenous Coordination Centres (ICC) managers in negotiating Regional Partnership Agreements with Indigenous representative bodies in each region.

The Division will host a national summit of senior Indigenous officers from all State and Territory arts agencies and appropriate national agencies in October 2004.

There are many examples of Australia Council collaboration between agencies and across government. The Australia Council works with National, State and local government bodies as well as corporate and community networks. The Australia Council partnership arrangements include:

- all State and Territory arts agencies
- Australian Local Government Association
- DCITA
- AFC
- Murray Darling River Basin Commission
- National Education and the Arts Network¹
- DOTARS
- ABS
- DEWR
- ATO.
- CSIRO

The foundation laid down by the Australia Council work with ATSIC and ATSI on arts centres in recent years means that the Council has experience working in a cluster of agencies and is integration ready. Art and Craft Centres are a complex policy and service delivery issue with a range of stakeholders. The Council as a frontier agency is keen to continue to work cooperatively and closely with the Department.

The Australia Council makes a substantial investment in Indigenous arts. The Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Arts Board has a \$3.95m budget targetted specifically to Indigenous arts. In addition every Board and Division provides funding, which benefits Indigenous artists, organisations and communities. This contribution is approximately \$3.6m.

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Arts Board	\$3.95m
Other Divisions	<u>\$3.6 m</u>
Total	\$7.55m

Overview on arts initiatives directed at Indigenous Australians

The work of Australia's Indigenous artists, both traditional and contemporary, is cited internationally as among the most vibrant of our times: powerful and unique, spectacular and subtle, a living expression of the lives of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, a continuation of the world's oldest civilisation, a badge of pride for all Australians.

The passion of the Bangarra Dance Theatre, the inspiration of Rover Thomas' landscapes, the eclectic rhythms of rock band Yothu Yindi, the multimedia visions of Tracey Moffatt, the haunting stage performances of David Gulpillil: these are expressions of Indigenous Australia regularly seen by the world, and hailed by

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audiences and critics. Behind these big names - and often mentored by them - are the newer, emerging talents, combining the strengths of the past with the boldness and vitality of modern Australia.

This worldwide recognition and praise of our Indigenous arts is also perhaps the outstanding success story of government involvement with, and taxpayer funding of, Indigenous activities. Great status is attached to this in Indigenous communities in regional and urban Australia, and the arts offers a strong base from which to tackle still-unresolved issues in crucial areas such as health and education.

Australia's Indigenous cultures are not stuck in the past but are living forces, each with its own strength and energy. They are a vital, expanding component of Australia's cultural diversity, and the Australia Council helps maintain them by reinforcing their value to Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australians, and ensuring creative output is sustained for the health and wellbeing of all Indigenous Australians – culturally, economically and socially.

Artists have become the economic drivers of many communities. After direct government grants, money generated from art is the single most important source of income for Indigenous Australians. This supports not only the creation of arts product, but also broader family and community responsibilities. In many cases, working artists underpin everyday community life.

Beyond the communities, Indigenous art is often profiled as investment property in auction houses, with headlines built on extraordinary prices. Many think “the artists must be getting rich”; few appreciate that most Indigenous artists see only a fraction of the sale price, that artists' income is often distributed across family and community. The Council has researched the impacts of this and provided substantial advice on the issue of resale royalties.

In many galleries and tourist souvenir shops, there is strong evidence of appropriation of traditional imagery and design. To help protect copyright and cultural ownership, the Australia Council invests over \$600,000 annually in independent legal and copyright advice for the arts – with a major focus on Indigenous artists.

In the Indigenous sphere, art and culture are not “lifestyle” elements as they often are in Western societies; for Indigenous Australians, culture has always been central to their survival and prosperity. Cultural expression is an integral part of life for Indigenous Australians; without it, they cannot shape their identity. Traditional (classical) arts and emerging (innovative) arts are intertwined, and rely upon each other.

Activities such as singing, dancing, music-making, writing, painting, weaving and filmmaking not only involve the creation of works, but teach younger people important skills, help to preserve information and restore traditional values. The transmission and continuation of these cultures through each new generation relies on respect for the authority, knowledge and wisdom of elders, and the capacity of young and emerging talents for innovation.

This is where the success of Indigenous arts comes from.

Through the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Arts Board, the Australia Council has shaped partnerships between individual artists, arts companies and organizations, communities, entrepreneurs, governments and departments at all levels. This lengthy involvement has not only helped to sustain and expand Indigenous arts, but has also served as an important conduit for non-indigenous Australian to understand the broader needs of Indigenous communities, and to inform government policies that allow Indigenous Australians to shape and improve their lives, and to control and enhance their cultural heritage.

For three decades the Board has been the primary source of advice to Government (through the Council and Department of Communications, Information Technology and the Arts) on Indigenous arts. As a result, Indigenous Australians are increasingly using their art to express ideas and emotions, responsibilities and stories about their lives, and to comment and reflect on issues that impact on their future. Art has given Indigenous Australians a new voice, through the oldest means of expression. In many cases it has restored dignity and hope, offered confidence and turned around lives.

The Australia Council, the nation's peak arts organisation, encourages Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities to develop the cultural forms that are appropriate to their contemporary lives, and also integral to Australia's national identity. Their arts are unique, and supporting them becomes a vital investment in Australia's future. As a professional, highly regarded national authority in the field of Indigenous arts, the Australia Council is ready to assist further in achieving these objectives.

Some programs assisting the delivery of the Ministerial Taskforce priority areas

Under the Government's new arrangements for Indigenous affairs, a Ministerial Taskforce on Indigenous Affairs has set three priority areas for further policy development and potential investment:

- early childhood intervention, improving primary health and improving early educational outcomes;
- safer communities (including issues of authority, governance and law); and
- reducing dependency on passive welfare and boosting employment and economic development.

The following is some information about examples of Australia Council programs which assist the delivery of the Ministerial Taskforce priority areas:

Reducing welfare dependency, boosting employment and economic development

The Australia Council supports many arts projects with strong sustainability and economic development outcomes for Indigenous people. Council's expertise in shaping and supporting effective strategies is acknowledged in the Government's choice of the Council to deliver much of the Contemporary Visual Arts Craft Strategy. Council's work in tax reform and education has demonstrated our success in cross portfolio approaches to supporting business development.

The recent devolution of ATSIC impacts on organisations and people that ATSIC funded, including Indigenous Art and Craft Centres. The Australia Council worked with ATSIC

and Government departments to strengthen these centres, so that Indigenous artists could reach new levels of excellence, but the long-term viability of many centres needs attention.

From 1973 to 1992 the Australia Council funded infrastructure support for Indigenous Art and Craft Centres - the foundation funding that now sees over 140 arts and craft centres in all States and the Northern Territory. Some centres have become prolific income earners, establishing entrepreneurial programs of international scope. Maruku Arts produce thousands of small wooden artifacts each year which are marketed through international fairs such as Chicago's SOFA expo and the Sydney International Gift and Trade Fair.

Colin Mercer found that every dollar spent by ATSIC on Art and Craft Centres generated a further \$2 of which \$1.50 was returned direct to artists. This support of art and craft centres has meant that communities have a central focus and their culture can be protected from 'carpetbaggers' and 'unscrupulous dealers'.

The Council's continuing support of umbrella agencies such as ANKAAA and Desart has enabled them to undertake strategic advocacy and sector professional development. While the situation of the 5,000 or so Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders who are members of Art and Craft Centres is improving, there is still a long way to go and Indigenous artists are likely to earn much less money from arts and non-arts activities than their white counterparts.

The development of employment and markets is intrinsic to many recent funded projects, including:

- Support for a number of Arts Marketing cooperatives in the Northern Territory directly to drive market development and boost employment
- Support to the Dandenong Ranges Music Council Inc to help build community music partnerships, services and coordination, and work with resident and guest professional artists including members of the Melbourne Symphony Orchestra
- Funds for the Ananguku Arts & Cultural Aboriginal Corporation to help the Pitjantjatjara dancers develop a presentation based on the Anangu cultural form of story telling to both market their own work, and maintain their cultural heritage and the Anangu Printmaking Project - workshops that involving collaboration between Indigenous artists and non-Indigenous printmakers, aimed at developing Indigenous artists in remote areas who have not had access to specialist training in printmaking
- The Paupiyala Tjarutja Aboriginal Corporation Tjuntjuntjara Music Mentoring Program, which will allow emerging musical artists to develop their skills on an individual as well as group basis in three months of intensive workshops.

Outside of CITA the Australia Council sees great potential in harnessing Indigenous Business Australia's expertise to strengthen and expand Indigenous enterprise especially arts and craft centres, publishing houses and media groups.

Safer communities (including issues of authority, governance and law)
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Australia Council support for indigenous arts has had a powerful impact on the wellbeing of many Indigenous communities; a strong culture is often an indicator of community health and safety:

- The Jilkmimggan Womens' Art Project in 2003 supported the elder women to work with younger girls to create new works, develop artistic skills in video/visual art and to provide opportunities for community development, culture and traditional language exchange.

Safer communities result from respect for authority, governance and law, and the Australia Council has developed and published internationally-acclaimed protocols for dealing with Indigenous culture. (The Tasmanian state government was inspired to publish a local edition.). People who have experienced being in custody and institutions can carry the risks from abuse and disadvantage back into their communities.

Examples of art breaking this cycle by instilling skills, pride and confidence are:

- The Catalyst Youth Arts Organisation Inc 'New Grooves' a music project involving young people on Juvenile Justice Orders working with professional musicians to create a CD of their new work.
- Access Arts Incorporated's 'Cultural Links' collaborative project with Indigenous people marginalised by mental illness that built a culturally appropriate, supportive network of key organisations to help mental health consumers and arts and cultural communities in South East Queensland.
- Bangarra Dance Theatre working extensively with local Indigenous communities (with the support of a major corporate sponsor, Telstra Country Wide) to inspire and encourage people of all ages to learn to enjoy themselves through artistic expression.

Arts activity is a very successful vehicle for a strong sense of living community. For example Council support for Gadigal Information Service Aboriginal Corporation's Klub Koori events and Fair Days has built and maintained valuable networks and pride in identity.

The Croc Festival and OPSM won the ABAF Business Arts Partnership of the Year award for 2004. The Australia Council is a strong champion of the Croc Festivals. With 45 schools participating and over 2000 students attending over three days, Croc Festival is a major community event. *Respect Yourself, Respect Your Culture* is the festival's theme. Respecting one's self and one's culture are essential factors in any community where the arts are alive and well.

Early childhood intervention, improving primary health and improving early educational outcomes

As a pilot for national extension the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Arts Board is building a multi agency partnership to focus on domestic violence, families and children in New South Wales. This involves the State Departments of Community Services (DOCS the primary agency for early childhood intervention, child protection and care) and Aboriginal Affairs and community based welfare and arts organisations. Resources from the NSW ATSI 2004 budget, DOCS and ATSIAB are committed and a planning forum is planned for the near future.

Singer Jimmy Little, recipient of the 2003 Australia Council Red Ochre Award for his lifetime contribution to Indigenous art, travelled to Derby in north-west Australia to

help bring kids with woeful rates of truancy back into school. The result: Jimmy and his musicians and local artists and councillors joined forces in the classroom, gave Indigenous children a dose of their art, and more than doubled school attendance rates.

Council's experience with arts practice in this area includes:

- a project with the Queensland Museum to produce audience development resources and programs targeting Indigenous children aged 3-8 years.
- community based art workshops with Julie Raffaele for at risk, Aboriginal & non-English speaking youth, at risk youth culminating in a professional quality exhibition during the Harmony Day Festival.

How we can work together to improve outcomes for Indigenous Australians

Given the artistic, cultural and economic significance of Indigenous arts enterprises, and their potential to boost employment and community self-esteem, the Australia Council believes a whole-of-government approach is essential. As part of any wider involvement in post-ATSIS cultural activity, the Council offers its expertise, advice and support to help such crucial activities. The Council sees Indigenous arts as not only a fast-rising export commodity, but also a potential counter in communities to problems such as school truancy, substance abuse, and dependence on government welfare.

We recommend an approach to substantially increase the social impact that the existing resources dedicated to art and culture (\$10.41m) can have across the Indigenous specific budget (previously administered by ATSIS \$967.41m) and across Government. Council recommends a coordinated approach built on a common understanding and multiple approaches to problem solving which:

- Preserves and develops Indigenous culture and traditions;
- Intervenes and breaks cycles of abuse, violence and disadvantage by instilling skills, pride and confidence in individuals and communities;
- Increases Indigenous communities' ability to produce and market their own work;
- Transports Indigenous arts in new directions;
- Builds cross agency partnerships to tackle social and community issues;
- Maximises revenue for artists and communities through effective exploitation of Indigenous intellectual property, and tax system provisions and pursuit of CVAC non-financial initiatives such as a resale royalty arrangement;
- Promotes contemporary Indigenous arts domestically and internationally; and,
- Continues to promote community engagement with the arts.

The Australia Council offers the relationships and networks at national state and local level with government, Indigenous communities and arts sectors. We bring extensive experience from a wide range of projects.

We understand that the delivery of services will be facilitated by a network of 22 Indigenous Coordination Centres (ICCs) taking the place of ATSIC regional offices. ICCs are headed by a manager (employed by DIMIA) and are staffed by individuals who now work for a range of agencies. We offer to support the 22 ICC managers in negotiating Regional Partnership Agreements with Indigenous representative bodies in each region. We suggest the following as ways in which we can work together.

National co-ordination and integration

Council has already established structures and networks, which can support the Ministerial Taskforce priority areas.

- For example the Council established the first formal network of Australian, state and territory government arts and education departments. The network has commissioned research to measure the impact of school-based arts participation on learning and development for at-risk and disadvantaged students, including indigenous children and young people, with findings to be released in late 2004.
- The Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Arts Board convenes an annual conference of all the major Indigenous arts organisations in Australia. DCITA senior staff participated in the most recent meeting by teleconference. The Board will open all future meetings to the ICC managers.
- ATSIAB will host a national summit of senior Indigenous officers from all State and Territory arts agencies and appropriate national agencies in October 2004. We propose to open up the national summit to address the Taskforce priorities.

Filling the critical analysis gaps

Indigenous arts research is a research priority of the Australia Council. The Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Board review identified lack of rigorous data on the Indigenous arts sector as a major barrier to effective policy and program development. The Australia Council Research Centre and ATSIAB are working together to identify major gaps in information and how to address them.

- The Australia Council is working with DCITA and the Statistical Working Group of the Cultural Ministers Council on the *Estimating the Value of Indigenous Cultural Product* research. This project started in 2000 to obtain Indigenous data and improve understanding of the sector. The project started by looking at Indigenous art and craft, which is still being investigated.
- The Australia Council is also investigating opportunities to undertake parallel research on Indigenous contemporary music to complement the Statistical Working Group (SWG) *Contemporary Music Research*. This research is scheduled for 2005.
- Increased resources and emphasis on Indigenous research across government is a priority for Indigenous policy development. However, at the current level of resourcing through SWG and the Australia Council of Indigenous cultural research it will take decades to map the sector.
- It is important that this research is developed specifically taking into account Indigenous issues and sector. However, this data needs to connect into general sector research so that it's not always an added extra. The Australia Council and DCITA could investigate opportunities to work with the ARC and their Indigenous researcher program.

Prepared 23 August 2004 by:

Mark Stapleton Unit Manager Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Arts Division

Contacts: Landline 02 9215 9014 Mobile 0417 238 158 Email m.stapleton@ozco.gov.au