

Adrian Collette AM, Chief Executive Officer, Australia Council for the Arts:

I welcome the opportunity to update the Committee on the Australia Council's current areas of focus.

I'd like to begin with acknowledging the challenging summer we've just experienced and salute the many artists and creative responders who were among the first to act in times of crisis to support the communities impacted by the bushfires. The extraordinary creative response, donating time and resources, mobilising fans and raising millions of dollars, has been a timely reminder of what art and creativity can do, for the benefit of all Australians.

The Council's two core activities are investment in, and advocacy for, arts and creativity.

Considerable activity is underway in our multi-year funding programs for arts organisations. Following last year's announcement, we have been transitioning to the new National Performing Arts Partnership Framework, which replaces the former MPA Framework. This brings competition, dynamism and transparency to this significant area of investment.

In addition, we are in the final stages of assessing our Four Year Funding program for arts organisations. As with any competitive process, there will be good news and difficult news when we announce the outcomes in late March, with some new organisations receiving multi-year funding for the first time, and some organisations ceasing their multi-year funding agreement with the Council. For the latter, we ensure that adequate time is provided for them to transition. The Australia Council will work closely with many of these organisations to explore alternative funding sources to try to ensure that we capture the potential value that could be generated by so many of them. We will update the Committee on the outcomes of this program once it is completed.

The Council continues to produce significant research that advances a compelling case for the social, cultural and economic value of Australian arts and creativity. Our recently released research on Domestic Arts Tourism, *Connecting the Country*, reveals that arts and creativity are already a major driver for domestic tourism and could be key to revitalising regional tourism and supporting local economies.

Arts tourists are high value tourists – they are more likely to travel further, stay longer and spend more than domestic tourists overall. This research provides a powerful argument for greater investment in cultural tourism.

In December we hosted the inaugural National Arts and Disability Awards and celebrated the work and achievements of outstanding artists Janice Florence, Madeleine Little and Dion Beasley, all of whom have made significant cultural contributions as artists with disability.

And next week we will be celebrating this year's Australia Council Awards, recognising outstanding and sustained contributions to Australian art and creativity.

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These are just some of our areas of activity as we work to deliver against the corporate priorities of our strategy *Creativity Connects Us*.

We continue to strongly advocate for the important role that creativity will play for a brighter future for all Australians, whether in the social returns of community cohesion and well-being, the returns of a strong, competent and diverse Australian culture or the economic returns of increased investment for cultural tourism, export, trade and jobs.