

Senate Legal and Constitutional Affairs Committee
PO Box 6100
Parliament House
Canberra ACT 2600
legcon.sen@aph.gov.au

17th July 2015

Dear Sir/Madam,

Re: Impact of the 2014 and 2015 Commonwealth Budget decisions on the Arts

I am an emerging artist and curator based in Melbourne. I hold a Diploma of Visual Arts and a Bachelor Degree in Arts (Fine Arts), and have over eight years of experience as a professional artist. I have exhibited in group and solo shows both nationally and internationally, and participated in international residencies and study tours. I am also an active member of the Melbourne Arts community, having worked and volunteered for many galleries and Arts organisations.

I have been awarded funding and grants towards my practice, including the Australia Council for the Arts ArtStart career development grant. I have just completed my ArtStart development year, and the opportunities that receiving this grant has presented me with have had major positive impacts on my career.

ArtStart enabled me to invest in professional quality equipment that resulted in my first exhibition to include an artist fee payment. It also helped fund Arts publication subscriptions and skills training to further development my abilities and professionalism. It helped fund a residency and study tour in New York, where my experiences and knowledge has greatly informed my own practice and given me more to offer my colleagues and the Arts organisations I am affiliated with. The trip also offered me insights into new positive ways in which the Arts can benefit society, and enrich the lives of others.

I was in New York experiencing the benefits of what has been a tremendously successful ArtStart funding program for so many artists, when I found out that the Budget was cutting an exceedingly massive proportion of funding from the Australia Council for the Arts, and that the ArtStart program and funding programs for the small to medium non-profit Arts organisations were to be immediately suspended.

This news horrified me. Not only is this taking away opportunities for individual artists to develop and advance their careers through much needed funding, but it has also undermined their only platform to present their work to the public and their peers, the small to medium non-profit gallery.

I don't think Mr Brandis understands the challenges that face Australian artists. Artists do not proceed immediately from graduating on to exhibiting in commercial galleries and major Arts institutions. They have to build recognition through exhibiting in small to medium galleries first. Small to medium non-profits also support emerging artists in many other ways, and offer programs that educate and enrich the communities they are based in. Some of these organisations also reach out to rural communities giving them access to Arts and cultural experiences and opportunities that don't exist in most rural environments.

Another benefit of being an ArtStart recipient is the respect that it brings to your practice. It is a massive privilege to be selected by a committee of high-profile professionals within the Arts. It is also the existence of these funding programs that provide more opportunities for employment within the Arts. Professional Arts practitioners rely on these positions to help subsidise the generally low income produced from their Arts practices.

The people judging and selecting funding proposal should be from the Arts, with the training and experience to understand and appreciate challenging and contemporary creative themes. This is why the Australian Arts is a progressive and respected force on a global level. Being challenging and progressive also means that art has a dynamic and enlightening impact on its audiences, and offers more to society on a whole.

For these reasons and many others I urge you to make a further enquiry into a Budget decision that will so obviously devastate the Australian Arts sector. Your decision will greatly effect my personal situation, and that of all artists and Arts professionals around Australia.

Thank you for the opportunity to voice my opinion and for taking the time to consider my submission.

Yours sincerely,

Bianca Tainsh