

# Museum of Contemporary Art Australia

12 February 2013

Senator Glenn Sterle  
Chair  
Senate Standing Committees on Rural  
and Regional Affairs and Transport  
PO Box 6100  
Parliament House  
Canberra ACT 2600  
Australia

Dear Senator,

Re: Australia Council Bill 2013

I write to you on behalf of the Museum of Contemporary Art Australia and our Board of Directors. We are grateful to the Committee for the opportunity to respond to the proposed Australia Council Bill 2013.

We largely welcome the Bill. We believe that it improves the clarity of the Australia Council's remit and we welcome the fact that the Bill reflects both the Council's responsibilities to supporting artists and also its role in developing audiences for their work.

We also believe that the Bill lays down the basis for an effectively operating Council in future. In particular, we welcome the creation of a new skills-based Board and the requirement that the Australia Council should produce a corporate plan that is connected to its investment and financing programs. The implementation of these measures will mean that the recipients of the Australia Council's funding have a clearer understanding of the outcomes they need to support as a result of receiving public funding.

We have one major concern, however. We believe that there is a fundamental omission in the functions the Bill proposes for the Australia Council. This is to support and uphold the right to artists' freedom of expression. We strongly feel that this principle must continue to be enshrined in statute as it sits at the foundation of a diverse and confident arts sector. We believe that freedom of expression is fundamental to an Australian arts practice that is recognised for excellence internationally.

We would therefore like to see the Bill setting out the Australia Council's responsibility to supporting and upholding the right to artists' freedom of expression as an explicit function.

We would appreciate a copy of this letter being distributed to all members of the Committee on Rural and Regional Affairs and Transport.

Yours sincerely,

Elizabeth Macgregor, OBE  
Director