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Dreyfus's deceptions can't hide the Coalition's support for the Arts

28 May 2014

Mark Dreyfus, the Shadow Minister for the Arts, has demonstrated yet again his tendency to make deliberately misleading statements.

In an interview with Perth community radio station, RTR FM 92.1 (23 May 2014), Mr Dreyfus suggested that funding to the Castlemaine State Festival through the Australian Council for the Arts was threatened.

Mark Dreyfus is again proven wrong.

In truth the Castlemaine State Festival will receive $493,520 through the Australia Council's Regional Festivals Project Fund from 21 March 2014 to 30 June 2019. The Festival was awarded a further $30,000 to develop a mobile application for its 40th anniversary.

In a shallow attempt to create fear and score cheap political points, it is wholly disingenuous of Mr Dreyfus to assert that the Castlemaine State Festival is threatened.

Ladling ignorance upon misstatement, Mr Dreyfus failed to also acknowledge that the Festival had four funding applications rejected during the years of the Rudd-Gillard Governments.

Coalition support for the Arts remains unchallenged.

During the period of the Howard Government, Commonwealth funding to the Australia Council increased by more than 110% and support for the Arts generally rose by 65.8%—more than twice the rate of inflation.

Since my time previously as Arts Minister in 2007 when I introduced the Producer Offset, Post, Digital and Visual Effects Offset, and Location Offset schemes (and continued by Labor), more than $1 billion in Commonwealth support has been provided. This policy has in turn leveraged investment in to Australia's screen industries and broader economy of over $3.7 billion.

I know that a strong economy and strong budget are the best tools the Arts could have. As with all portfolio areas, Arts was asked to contribute some modest economies to help arrest the budget emergency which was Labor's legacy. Labor should accept that their appalling fiscal negligence record of six straight deficits during the Rudd-Gillard years needs to be addressed through a strong long-term vision.

In the face of Mark Dreyfus's wilful misstatement of the facts, the record shows that the Arts' best friend has been, and will continue to be, the Coalition.

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