

Senate Standing Committee on Environment and Communications

Answers to Senate Estimates Questions on Notice

Additional Estimates Hearings February 2016

Communications Portfolio

Australia Council

Question No: 62

Australia Council

Hansard Ref: Page 70, 9/02/2016

Topic: Australia Council – formal response

Senator Ludlam, Scott asked:

Senator LUDLAM: Senator Bilyk and I spent about six or eight months traipsing around the country last year as part of a Senate inquiry that was called fairly shortly after the budget cuts. Does the Australia Council have a formal response to the report that we handed down late last year?

Mr Grybowski: No.

Senator LUDLAM: May I invite you to make an informal response? It concerned the operations and funding base for the Australia Council rather intimately. If you want to put a view to us, I will give you that opportunity now.

Mr Grybowski: A response to the whole report?

Senator LUDLAM: Yes.

Mr Grybowski: I am happy to take that on notice.

Senator LUDLAM: That is fine—a response to the report or its recommendations. If you are happy to take that on notice, I would appreciate it.

Mr Grybowski: I think, considering the time, that would be most appropriate.

Senator LUDLAM: No, I could talk about this all day! But we can leave it there.

Answer:

The Australia Council acknowledges the work of the committee through the Senate Inquiry process and overwhelming support evident in the 2,700 submissions and witness testimonies from the arts sector. The Australia Council also acknowledges the specific concerns articulated by the sector regarding the negative impact of the budget cuts on the Council's strategic development activity and new grants model.

The formal response to the Senate Inquiry report and accompanying recommendations is the responsibility of the Australian Government.

Recommendations 8 and 9 of the Senate Committee's report specifically refer to the Australia Council. Recommendation 8 requests the Australia Council give consideration to how individual artists could be prioritised in its funding programs.

The Australia Council has given careful consideration to the needs of individual artists and will allocate a significant portion of its core grants budget to development and project grants for individuals. For example: in the Council's September 2015 grant round 57 per cent or 166 of the 290 projects funded were from individual artists. The Council will continue to monitor closely the success rates for individual artists, acknowledging the reduced number of grant rounds and funding levels following the budget measures applied to Australia Council appropriations from 2015-16.

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Recommendation 9 calls on the Australia Council to give consideration to the viability of re-launching a specific programme for the development of early career individual artists, similar to the ArtStart programme. Due to a reduced core grants budget the Australia Council is not currently able to reinstate a specialist program for early career artists. Individual early career artists are eligible to apply through the Council's development grant category for similar career development support, acknowledging that the competition for these funds is significantly higher.