

SENATE STANDING COMMITTEE ON LEGAL AND CONSTITUTIONAL AFFAIRS  
ATTORNEY-GENERAL'S PORTFOLIO

**Group: 2**

**Program: 2.1**

**Question No. SBE14/188**

**Senator Collins asked the following question at the hearing on 20 November 2014:**

1. The Australia Council has published a new Strategic Plan. At the Budget Estimates the Committee was told that the Council was working through how it would cope with the cuts imposed upon it by the Government. Since then the Strategic Plan has been published, but it makes no mention of how the available funding is to be divided among the various art forms. Please provide a breakdown of funding for the various art forms.
2. What funding is being budgeted to support each of the four Goals of the Plan?
3. What funding is being allocated under this plan to the major performing arts organisations?
4. What staffing is being provided to support Goal 1 – Arts without Borders? Will officers be placed overseas? In which cities? What will be their duties? Have any appointments been made? Who are they and what are their qualifications?
5. The Council told Budget Estimates hearings that the Budget cuts will mainly affect programs for individual artists, groups of artists, and audience and market development. In 2014-15 grants in this area will be reduced by \$9m. Is this still the case?
6. How will the peer review process work under this new Strategic Plan?
7. Under the Community Partnerships program of the Australia Council 14 organisations were awarded contracts for six years 2014-2019. What is now the status of those contracts with community arts organisations under the new arrangements? Is it correct that these contracts have been rescinded? How has this affected the arrangements that the organisations have made in relation to renting premises, hiring staff, and so on? Is it also correct that this decision has put at risk some millions of dollars of sponsorship and private sector support? What was the reason for changing the terms of the agreed contracts?
8. The Interactive Games Fund was abolished in the Budget. I am informed that “The new grants model will accept applications from practicing Australia artists who work in digital and experimental arts to have their art proposals assessed by qualified peers, including gaming.” How will applications from the games industry be invited? What will be the criteria for their assessment?

**The answer to the honourable senator's question is as follows:**

1. As part of the launch of the new Strategic Plan (2014-2019) the Australia Council announced a new, streamlined and more flexible grants model to be implemented in January 2015. The amount of money allocated to each art form will primarily be determined by the number and quality of applications received through the new grants model. The Australia Council will closely monitor the outcomes of each grant round and seek to maintain an appropriate spend in each area of practice. It is also important to note that the new grants model has been designed to have the flexibility to respond to new and/or multidisciplinary forms of artistic practice.

2. The four goals of the Strategic Plan (2014-2019) are informed by the legislative functions in the *Australia Council Act 2013*. These goals are intersecting, aspirational statements that set the direction for the work of the Australia Council over the next five years. The various programs which the Australia Council delivers to artists, arts organisations and the arts sector as a whole, will contribute to the Goals in several and joint ways. Consequently activity to support the Council's four goals as a whole will be funded from within the Council's 2014-15 appropriation from Government, but there is no specific budget allocation for each of the individual Goals.
3. On behalf of the Government, the Australia Council manages the core funding for the 28 Major Performing Arts (MPA) companies, delivered through the MPA framework in partnership with the states. In 2014-15 total funding allocated to the Australia Council for the MPAs is \$106.766 million.
4. 11 Australia Council staff will work in international development, directly supporting Goal 1 – Australian arts are without Borders. When the Australia Council launched its Strategic Plan in August 2014, a new initiative was announced to create a team of international development managers. The purpose of this team will be to gather market intelligence, to support artist mobility and networks and to increase audiences for Australian arts in key international markets. The international development manager positions will be frontline roles focussed on specific regions, working in collaboration with the sector and with the relevant Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade missions. These roles are designed to inform the Australia Council's activities and areas of support and to represent the Australian arts sector. In 2014, Ms Sophie Travers was appointed as the international development manager for Western Europe. Ms Travers has previously worked with the British Council and is an experienced arts producer with extensive knowledge of international market development. Four additional positions may be made in the future, including two for Asia. Further details regarding the team of international development managers are yet to be finalised. No officers are placed overseas at this time.
5. Yes.
6. In May 2014 the Australia Council implemented a new peer assessment structure that allows for the engagement of peer panels specifically for each grant assessment round. This new structure provides greater diversity and breadth of peer representation, and supports the use of panels that can more effectively respond to multi-disciplinary and hybrid art form applications. The Australia Council currently has a pool of 651 peers to be drawn on when forming assessment panels. Approved by the Australia Council board, this pool is made up of artists, arts professionals and industry experts from across Australia who have self-nominated to be peers. From 2015, grant applicants can select the practice area for the panel of peers they would like to assess their application from the following options:
  - Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Arts
  - Arts and Disability
  - Community Arts and Cultural Development
  - Dance
  - Emerging and Experimental Arts

- Literature
- Multi-art form
- Music
- Theatre
- Visual Arts

After a decision is reached by the peer panel, the Australia Council Board considers the decision and the applicants are notified, the Australia Council publishes the list of successful applicants and the peers on the assessment panel on the Australia Council website.

7. As part of the Strategic Plan and new grants model launch on 18<sup>th</sup> August 2014, the Australia Council announced the new *Six Year Funding for Organisations Program (2016 – 2021)*. This new six year organisational funding will see all of the Australia Council's regularly funded organisations, across all art forms and jurisdictions, aligned to ensure that a stronger national ecology is achieved across all areas of artistic practice. Following the launch, the Australia Council informed the Community Partnerships Key Producers that, in order to align existing multi-year funding arrangements to the new Six Year Funding for Organisations Program and in accordance with the termination clause in their contracts, agreements would not be continued beyond 31 December 2016. The Key Producers have been invited to apply in 2015 to the new six year organisational funding program which commences in January 2016. The key benefit available to the Key Producers is the opportunity to apply for greater annual funding amounts. The Australia Council is engaged in ongoing discussions with the Key Producers, individually and as a group, to assist them to manage the new application timeframes. The Australia Council has also put forward a range of commitments and offers of assistance to the Key Producers, including the offer to meet with and write to other funding partners to assist the Key Producers to maintain relationships and existing support for projects. The Australia Council remains strongly committed to supporting Community Arts and Cultural Development. This commitment is reflected in the new Strategic Plan, particularly under Goal Three 'the arts enrich daily life for all'. Under the new grants model, all applicants will have the option of choosing a Community Arts and Cultural Development peer panel to assess their work.
8. The Australia Council's new grants model is open to artists in all areas of practice. All practising artists and arts workers are eligible to apply, so long as they are Australian citizens or permanent residents. From January 2015 there will be five grant programs, each with specific assessment criteria published on the Australia Council website:
  - Development grants for individuals and groups valued between \$5,000 and \$25,000.
  - Arts project grants for individuals and groups valued between \$10,000 and \$50,000.
  - Arts project grants for organisations valued between \$10,000 and \$150,000.
  - Fellowships valued at \$100,000.
  - Six year funding for organisations.

Following the launch of the Strategic Plan and announcement of the new grants model on 18<sup>th</sup> August 2014, the Australia Council has delivered general and sector specific information sessions to promote the new grants program in every state and territory capital city as well as Geelong Vic, Alice Springs NT, Kalgoorlie WA and Northern Queensland. Information about the new grant programs is available on the Australia Council website and in 6,000 printed funding guides distributed across the country.