

# Chapter 1

## Introduction

### Conduct of the inquiry

1.1 The Australia Council Bill 2013 and the Australia Council (Consequential and Transitional Provisions) Bill 2013 were introduced and read a first time in the House of Representatives on Wednesday, 20 March 2013.<sup>1</sup>

1.2 On 21 March 2013, on the recommendation of the Selection of Bills Committee, the provisions of the bills were referred to the Rural and Regional Affairs and Transport Legislation Committee for inquiry and report by 9 May 2013.<sup>2</sup>

1.3 The reasons given for the Selection of Bills Committee's recommendation were to determine the impact of the provisions contained in the bills on the Australia Council and on Australian arts and cultural organisations.<sup>3</sup>

1.4 In accordance with its usual practice, the committee advertised the inquiry on its website and also wrote to a number of relevant organisations inviting submissions. Twenty-eight submissions were received, as shown in Appendix 1.

1.5 The committee held a public hearing on Tuesday, 23 April 2013, in Canberra. A list of witnesses who appeared at the public hearing may be found at Appendix 2. The references to the Hansard transcript made in this report are to the proof transcript and page numbers between it and the official transcript may vary. The Hansard transcript of the hearing is available online at the committee's website.<sup>4</sup>

1.6 After the committee had concluded its deliberations, the Senate Scrutiny of Bills Committee made its comments on the bills available to the committee. The committee appreciates receiving these comments which it notes and which may be found at Appendix 3.

### Purpose of the bill

1.7 The Australia Council Bill 2013 (the bill) provides for the functions, powers and governance structure and arrangements of the Australia Council. It establishes a governing board and provides for the terms and conditions of appointed board

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1 *House of Representatives Votes and Proceedings*, 20 March 2013, p. 2185.

2 *Journals of the Senate*, 21 March 2013, p. 3865.

3 Selection of Bills Committee, *Report No. 4 of 2013*, Appendix 4.

4 See

[www.aph.gov.au/Parliamentary\\_Business/Committees/Senate\\_Committees?url=rrat\\_ctte/aust\\_council\\_bills\\_2013/hearings/index.htm](http://www.aph.gov.au/Parliamentary_Business/Committees/Senate_Committees?url=rrat_ctte/aust_council_bills_2013/hearings/index.htm).

members, procedures of the board, and enables the board to establish committees. The bill also provides for the appointment of a Chief Executive Officer and staff and consultants, requires an annual corporate plan to be prepared, provides for financial arrangements and provides for annual reporting requirements.

1.8 The Australia Council (Consequential and Transitional Provisions) Bill 2013 repeals the *Australia Council Act 1975*, and enables the Australia Council to continue to operate during the transition period.

### **Structure of report**

1.9 The remaining chapters of this report are as follows:

- Chapter 2 describes the background to, and the key provisions of, the bill; and
- Chapter 3 sets out the key issues raised during this inquiry.

1.10 Additional comments or reports in relation to these bills may be tabled in the Senate at a future time.

### **Acknowledgements**

1.11 The committee appreciates the time and effort of all those who provided both written and oral submissions to this inquiry—particularly in view of the short timeframe. Their contributions have assisted the committee considerably in its inquiry.