



**PAUL FLETCHER MP**  
Federal Member for Bradfield  
Minister for Communications,  
Cyber Safety and the Arts

MS20-000423

Mr Sam Walsh AO  
Chair  
Australia Council  
PO Box 576  
Pyrmont NSW 2009

Dear Mr <sup>Sam</sup> Walsh

I am writing to outline my expectations for the Australia Council for 2020-21.

The arts are vital to our national identity, and the Morrison Government recognises the significant contribution that artists, creatives, and arts and cultural organisations make to our cultural life. The considerable economic contribution of the arts and creative sector should also be widely acknowledged and promoted.

The impact of COVID-19 on the creative sectors has been extremely serious, and all who care about the arts in Australia have found it distressing to see productions halted, and artists, performers and other arts and creative sector workers not able to do what they do best.

I take this opportunity to acknowledge the work that the Australia Council has undertaken during these most unprecedented times. The Australia Council Board, Mr Adrian Collette AM, and Australia Council staff have all worked co-operatively with my Office and the Office for the Arts following the necessary implementation of nationwide COVID-19 restrictions, while continuing to engage directly with the sector.

The Australia Council's COVID-19 Response Package has responded to the sector's current needs and supports artists, arts practitioners, arts groups and arts organisations, including the small to medium sector. The provisions for reporting and other grant condition relief have been of great benefit to many, as has online learning to assist the arts and culture sector to navigate the immediate and long term impacts of COVID-19.

Adjustments to Four Year Funding for 2021-2024 will keep as many organisations as possible funded through this critical period. The commencement of research and analysis will identify immediate and long term impacts of COVID-19 on the sector, and support First Nations artists, creatives and organisations. These measures will support the sector to get back in business following the disruptions caused by COVID-19, reactivate and contribute to the recovery of Australia's economy and communities. I am of the view that the sector provides a strong example of how business can adapt to operate safely as we resume social and economic activities.

The commencement of the first four-year funding cycle under the National Performing Arts Partnership Framework is a significant milestone which recognises the culmination of significant collaborative work by the Australia Council, the Office for the Arts and the states and territory governments. The entry of new companies into the Framework will be a great outcome for the Australian arts sector, and a direct response to the outcomes of public consultation.

As the Government's principal arts funding and advisory body, the business of fostering excellence in Australian arts practice by supporting a diverse range of activities and a sustainable sector will remain the agency's key focus for 2020-21.

I expect that the Australia Council will continue to deliver support in the areas of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander arts practice, and promoting community participation in the arts across all states and territories, including from artists and arts organisations in regional and remote communities. In addition, I ask the Australia Council to focus on the following strategic priorities in 2020-21:

- Supporting Australian artists and arts organisations to respond to and navigate the immediate and long term impacts of COVID-19 and enabling creativity to continue as the sector recovers.
- Working collaboratively with the Office for the Arts to implement the Australian Government's COVID-19 Creative Economy Support Package, including the Sustainability and RISE funds.
- Implementing the new National Performing Arts Partnership Framework consistent with the timeline set out in Section 23 of the Framework and ensuring Government priorities and performance indicators continue to support longer term sustainability of Partnership Organisations.
- Complete the evaluation of the current Four Year Funding program and explore how the success of mechanisms contained in the National Performing Arts Partnership Framework may be applied to deliver multi-year investment that is sustainable and contestable.
- Work with the sector to deliver increased outcomes for audiences and diverse communities including in regional contexts in a COVID-19 safe way.
- Provide advice and evidence of how the Australia Council's investment in the arts is resulting in public benefits and strong audience engagement.

I congratulate the Australia Council on its recognition of achievement in the sector through the annual Australia Council Awards, the First Nations Arts Awards, and the National Arts and Disability Awards delivered in partnership with Arts Access Australia.

I note the Australia Council is applying for an extension for the 2020-21 Corporate Plan and request you comply with the Department of Finance guidance and all amendments to the Public Governance, Performance and Accountability Rules in this respect.

I ask that you continue to alert me and the Office for the Arts to any significant events or developments related to the Australia Council's activities and functions.

This Statement of Expectations and your corresponding Statement of Intent form an important component of the Australia Council's governance framework. I expect both will be public documents and I ask that you write to me with the Australia Council's Statement of Intent before the end of 2020. I have written to convey my expectations for 2020-21 to all arts portfolio agencies, and have copied this letter to the Chief Executive Officer of the Australia Council, Mr Adrian Collette AM.

I wish you and the Australia Council Board and executive team success in meeting outcomes and objectives for 2020-21.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Paul Fletcher', with a stylized flourish at the end.

Paul Fletcher

27/ 8/ 2020