



From the office of the Chair

7 March 2022

The Hon Paul Fletcher MP
Minister for Communications, Urban Infrastructure, Cities and the Arts
PO Box 6022
House of Representatives
CANBERRA ACT 2600

Dear Minister

Thank you for your letter of 6 November 2021 in which you set out your expectations for the Australia Council for 2021-22.

We welcome your acknowledgement of the Australia Council's important work during 2020-21 in supporting our arts and cultural sector as it has dealt with the unprecedented challenges of the COVID-19 pandemic.

COVID-19 recovery

The Australian Government's COVID-19 support measures throughout this period, including those targeted at the arts and entertainment industry such as the RISE and Arts Sustainability Funds, played a vital role in supporting individual artists and performers, organisations and businesses to manage the impact of the pandemic on their operations.

In addition to these pandemic responses, the Australia Council's direct investment through the National Performing Arts Partnership Framework, Four Year Funding for Organisations, and our grants for artists, organisations and projects provided much-needed certainty and continuity during this period.

The Australia Council has welcomed the opportunity to work closely and collaboratively with the Office for the Arts (OFTA) on their assessment of funding support measures, as well as providing advice and insights drawing upon the Council's deep connections across the arts and cultural sectors.

We look forward to continuing to work alongside OFTA in the development and delivery of future policy proposals and programs to support the growth of our cultural and creative industries and their contribution to Australia's social and economic well-being.

While the Omicron wave caused some further disruption to plans to rebuild and reopen, I am confident our artists and cultural organisations can look forward to 2022 with greater confidence. The success of the national vaccination effort (which the Australia Council was pleased to support through its 'Take Your Seat' campaign to encourage vaccination among arts and cultural

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audiences) and the easing of restrictions across all states and territories should provide greater certainty and fewer disruptions.

We remain alert however to the ongoing challenges for many artists and organisations in their recovery from COVID-19 and we will continue to focus on supporting our arts and cultural sector to rebuild and reopen safely and successfully.

National Performing Arts Partnership Framework

The introduction of the National Performing Arts Partnership Framework, including the entry of eight new organisations from regional and remote areas of Australia, represents a significant evolution in investment for performing arts organisations, with a stronger focus on accountability, performance outcomes and transparency.

The principles of the Framework, and the experience gained in its implementation in partnership with state and territory governments, provide a solid basis from which to examine how this approach could be used to strengthen the Australia Council's other multi-year investment strategies to ensure greater accessibility, stronger outcomes and clearer alignment with government priorities for the growth of our cultural and creative sectors.

The Australia Council will continue to progress this work in consultation with our state and territory funding partners and industry participants.

Digital mobility and creative economy opportunities

Through its Digital Culture Strategy, the Australia Council has a strong focus on supporting the digital mobility of Australian arts and creativity, including new developments in creating, distributing and experiencing art; supporting risk taking and experimentation with digital and emerging technologies; increasing the discoverability and access to Australian digital work; and, building partnerships across government and industries to maximise the benefits that digital offers the arts and cultural sector.

In this context, I am keen for the Australia Council to engage more collaboratively across the breadth of our cultural and creative industries and bring its expertise and experience to the fore in supporting the development of these industries and their contribution to our economic and social well-being.

Expanding access to arts opportunities

Supporting engaging arts experiences, expanding access to arts experiences, and promoting arts experiences in everyday life are priorities in the Australia Council's Corporate Plan 2021-25, *Creativity Connects Us*.

This includes a strong commitment to delivering arts and cultural experiences for all Australians regardless of where they live, including through the delivery of programs such as Playing Australia, the Contemporary Music Touring Initiative, and the Contemporary Touring Initiative, which support touring of the performing and visual arts to regional and remote communities.

Building capability

In addition to our direct investment in artists and organisations, the Australia Council has a strong focus on building leadership capabilities across arts and cultural organisations. Our leadership programs are designed to strengthen leadership capacity across the Australian arts and cultural sectors, including arts leaders in regional communities.

First Nations arts and culture

Support for First Nations arts and culture is one of the Australia Council's five key strategic objectives. We have a long-term commitment to supporting First Nations artists and organisations which have been strengthened through decades of investment. Our investment in First Nations arts is underpinned by First Nations decision-making through our First Nations Arts and Culture Strategy Panel.

Our Corporate Plan commits the Australia Council to a range of specific actions and outcomes to strengthen First Nations arts and culture, including growing experiences of First Nations arts and culture; supporting First Nations young people's artistic and cultural expression; and upholding the cultural rights of First Nations arts and cultural practitioners via the Protocols for using First Nations Cultural and Intellectual Property in the Arts.

The Australia Council welcomes the Indigenous Visual Arts Action Plan which was launched by yourself and Minister Wyatt last year, and we look forward to supporting its implementation and delivery of the action items in the plan to support a stronger and more viable First Nations arts and cultural sector. We also are working towards the delivery of a major First Nations arts and culture summit in the second half of 2022 with a particular focus on the protection and promotion of First Nations cultural authority.

The Australia Council has warmly welcomed the opportunity to deliver programs aligned to broader government priorities, including the 'Arts Going Digital' forum, as well as the program to progress ideas around the contribution of arts and creativity to mental health and wellbeing, an initiative of the Creative Economy Taskforce. The Australia Council will deliver a series of online and hybrid events in coming months to develop these ideas for future consideration by government.

Thank you for your continued support, and I look forward to keeping you informed about our progress.

Yours sincerely



Robert Morgan
Chair
Australia Council for the Arts