

# National Cultural Policy Submission

NCA Review submission

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I agree to any part of this submission to to be made public.

## **A place for every story.**

In 2007 Labor won the election and Peter Garrett was appointed Minister for the Environment, Heritage and the Arts by Prime Minister Kevin Rudd. The new Minister hosted a public forum in Brisbane to hear from the arts community. Having spent some years serving on the Australia Council as the Chair of the Dance Fund and member of Council I encouraged the new minister to increase funding to the Council and for funding not to be tied to particular activities. Fast forward to 2022 and we have a new Minister and a Cultural Policy soon to be announced. It's certainly timely that we have such a policy and I commend the government for their commitment to having one announced by the end of the year.

I respectfully advise the Minister to not proceed with the announced merger of the Australia Council and Creative Partnerships Australia (CPA). The latter organisation I have served on for 9 years. I see no valid reason why this merger has been proposed other than the Government claiming in the future that it has increased funding to the Australia Council, when in fact its given it tied money and activities it did not seek. Decades of diminishing funding to the Australia Council has resulted in it struggling to support a small network of arts companies. The small to medium sector is poorly supported and consequently been struggling for years to survive. Grass roots artists, cultural workers and organisations receive almost no support.

CPA has built a strong and trusting relationship with all those that support it from the 'friend next door' sponsor who gives through the Australian Cultural Fund (ACF) to the Tim Fairfax Family Foundation. CPA's brand is trusted by this sector. Why confuse its role in the eco system by putting it under the Australia Council? The Australia Council has enough to do supporting artists, advocating for the arts and providing the sector with much needed research.

There were good reasons that the CPA was established as a separate entity to the Australia Council by the Labor government. Firstly, its not in the Act that formed the Australia Council and secondly, the Australia Council has long held to the claim that it funds excellence and upholds this through its peer review process. CPA on the other hand makes no judgement on the artistic merit of projects and nor does it assess the artistic outcomes of projects. It does however have a very robust process for all of its support programs. For many artists and organisations CPA is the place they go to for assistance when their application to the Australia Council fails.

By way of example. Restless Dance Company based in Adelaide lost its Australia Council multi-year funding (2021-24) during the last peer reviewed grant round. In my experience serving on the Australia Council at every funding round there was a significant number of high quality projects that met all criteria and were deemed worthy of support but fell below the budget line. Restless Dance who lunched a matched funding campaign with CPA with the target to raise \$50,000 which would be

matched dollar for dollar by CPA. The campaign exceeded all expectations and the company raised over \$180,000.

The general public, philanthropists, private ancillary funds and the business sector like to make their own judgements about the merits of the projects they support. The Australia Council should not be the only arbiter of merit for the country's artistic pursuits. If you wish there to be a place for every story then you need to have more than one organisation working to support the cultural and creative industries. Multi-year grants to the CPA's Australian Cultural Fund granted in good faith by the Tim Fairfax Family Foundation are now in doubt. It's taken almost a decade to build trust and knowledge about the ACF, which now attracts more than \$9.5M. Why dismantle what has been a very successful organisation with a sharp focus?

It is disappointing to me that no consultation took place with CPA, the Australia Council or the broader sector prior to the merger being proposed, and it would at the very least be wise to talk to those who have benefitted from CPA's programs and services before finalising the decision.

### **Education**

The new government needs to reverse the significant increases the previous government made to tertiary fees for arts courses and conduct national research into the current state of tertiary-level artist training provision across all art forms. Many practice-based courses across the arts have been lost over the past two years with institutions cutting or reducing practice-based programs. The combination of increased fees and COVID have had a detrimental effect on arts training opportunities and in years to come the effects will be felt with fewer artists being trained and a diminished pipeline to our national performing arts companies. As well as a diminished pipeline of artists, this applies to creative and technical support as well (e.g. costume and set designers, sound & lighting and so on).

### **The Australia Singapore Arts Group**

Consideration should be given to continuing and celebrating the work of The Australia Singapore Arts Group, of which I was a member for five years. This joint venture between Australia and Singapore led to many fruitful artistic collaborations between artists and arts organisation. The Singaporean Government invested \$5M into that group's activities and the Australian Government also made funds available for projects and meetings. There should be a formal announcement of its ending or its continuation. I understand work went into a document that outlined the achievements of the group it would be good if this could be shared. As an English-speaking country, Singapore is a gateway for Australia to South-East Asia, amplifying the benefits of this relationship for Australia.