

# ArtsPeak

c/o PO Box 60, Potts Point, NSW 1335

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## **FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

### **Arts Industry Responds to Australia Council Review**

ArtsPeak, the confederation of Australian peak arts organisations, has responded to the recommendations of the Australia Council Review Report with a mix of enthusiasm and serious criticism and concern.

Members of ArtsPeak lodged submissions by the deadline last Friday, strongly supporting the report's recommendations for removal of the imposition of an efficiency dividend on the Council and the allocation of new government funding for "unfunded excellence". However, ArtsPeak members call for a much larger commitment than the recommended \$21.25 million. The case is strong, in particular, for a substantial increase in funding going to artists and to fragile small to medium arts organisations in all mediums. If Australia is to come close to Canada or New Zealand in allocation of the % of GDP going to arts support, it would have to at least double the current level of funding.

While ArtsPeak is opposed to any narrowing of the Australia Council Act, members welcome ideas that will open up new financial and support arrangements including 'matchmaking' with private sector sources, investment in start-up enterprises, and seeding and matched funding. In particular, members recommend that serious attention be paid to the need for space and security of tenure for artists and organisations.

While ArtsPeak agrees that the Australia Council board should have membership that includes people with excellent governance skills, they believe that a majority of members with deeply embedded artform knowledge and experience within the industry is essential in setting the Australia Council's strategic vision and policy decisions.

ArtsPeak strongly supports the maintenance of arm's length funding and peer assessment. For this reason, there is great resistance to dividing responsibility between the Australia Council and the Government's Office for the Arts on the principle of differentiating between 'excellence' and 'access'. Nor do they agree that Council staff should have any grant funding or sign off responsibilities

Co-convenor of ArtsPeak, Tamara Winikoff said today, "Excellence must be understood to include elements of innovation, risk-taking and equity across the diversity of the many cultures in Australia which are mediated by factors like geographic circumstances and multicultural experience." Winikoff added, "In the 21st Century, with advances in technology, the traditional separation of artists and audience is dissolving. It would run counter to trend to separate excellence in arts production and dissemination, from access to and participation in the arts."

Co-convenor of ArtsPeak Julie Dyson said "Policy development, funding splits and grants decisions need to be made within the context of up to date independent research and analysis of the whole arts ecology. In addition, we have long felt the need for an effective feedback loop from funding rounds and more regular consultation with the peak body representatives from the sector."

ArtsPeak agrees with the proposals for the Australia Council to better respond to inter-arts and newer forms of arts practice through some expansion of peer juries and advisory panels with this expertise. However, ArtsPeak members are opposed to any large increase in administration costs cutting into the funding allocation for artists and organisations.

#### **For media comment contact:**

Tamara Winikoff, Executive Director, National Association for the Visual Arts ph: 0411 162 156

Julie Dyson, National Director, Australian Dance Council - Ausdance Inc ph: 0412 211 513

#### **Also on behalf of ArtsPeak members:**

Ananguku Arts and Culture Aboriginal Corporation

Arts Access Australia (AAA)

Arts Industry Council South Australia (AICSA)

Arts Law Centre of Australia

Association of Arnhem and Northern Kimberly Aboriginal Artists (ANKAAA)

Australian Music Centre (AMC)

Australian Network for Art and Technology (ANAT)

Australian Performing Arts Centres Association (APACA)

Kultour

Music Council of Australia (MCA)

Performing Arts Touring Alliance (PATA)

Regional Arts Australia (RGA)

Theatre Network Victoria

Young People and the Arts Australia (YPAA)