

From the office of the Chief Executive Officer



15 June 2016

Ms Julie Dyson AM
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Aranda ACT 2614
Email: julie.dyson@home.netspeed.com.au

Dear Julie

Thank you for your letter of 6 June 2016. I note your concerns, and can assure you that the Australia Council appreciates the contribution that Ausdance has made to the sector over an extended period.

While I acknowledge the important points that you make in your letter, I offer the following information that will hopefully assist you in contextualising the decisions that have been made.

We are in the third year of a program of change initiated by the Australia Council Act 2013. The new Act was a result of an extensive independent review of the organisation undertaken in 2011/12. In August 2014, a whole of organisation Strategic Plan 2015 – 2018 *A Culturally Ambitious Nation* was launched. The Australia Council Review, the Australia Council Act, *A Culturally Ambitious Nation*, and the supporting programs and new processes, were all developed in the context of extensive and continuing sector consultation.

As part of this program of change our funding framework was comprehensively overhauled in order to align our grants program more closely with our strategic goals. The new framework was designed to create greater transparency and accountability in the grant-making process, and to facilitate a more equitable distribution of funds. It was also designed to facilitate renewal and the transparent entry and exit of organisations across Four Year Funding and project funding categories. While the various disruptions of the past year or so led to the need to amend some aspects of the program design prior to implementation, the principles remain clear and coherent. This includes the implementation of the revised peer assessment model. The peers for the Four Year Funding assessment were selected with their knowledge and insights into artistic, business and policy issues in mind.

The overall assessment process spanned several months including individual peer assessment, art form specific panel deliberation, cross art form “moderation”, analysis and budget application, and final Board approval. I have confidence therefore that the peer panels were well equipped to make fair and reasonable assessments across producing, presenting and service organisations.

The outcomes of the funding process bear witness to the effectiveness of the methodology in meeting the publicly stated aims. Some 70% of the organisations that were successful in securing Four Year Funding were previously Key Organisations while 30% were new. There is also a significant increase in investment overall, an appropriate geographic spread that

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reflects the vibrancy and sustainability within and across arts practice areas, and alignment to the Strategic Plan. We believe that we have achieved a high level of consistency while opening opportunities for renewal and change.

It was inevitable that in order to fund new organisations, the existing multi-year funding of some Key Organisations would not continue. All existing Key Organisations have funding contracts in place to December 2016. This end date was clear from the commencement of their contracts. Given the signals of uncertainty created by the events of the past year, and the knowledge of a finite funding contract, the governing bodies and management of these organisations have had some reasonable time to contemplate the potential impact of an unsuccessful application and make contingency plans accordingly.

We have clearly signalled our intention to support organisations in transition. Council staff have met or held discussions with all Key Organisations that have not been successful in achieving Four Year Funding. In response to their feedback and concerns, we are currently planning a range of activities designed to support change and transition.

Our Research and Knowledge Management team is currently undertaking detailed evaluation of the outcomes of the Four Year Funding program. Over the coming period we will progressively examine and consider the evidence produced, with a view to continuous improvement of the program. Sector consultation and discussion with the States will be integral to this process of reflection.

We are committed to maintaining close working relationships with all organisations that play a key role in the national arts ecosystem, and trust that the productive association that we have with Ausdance will continue.

Thank you again for writing to me.

Yours sincerely



Tony Grybowski
Chief Executive Officer

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