

ArtsPeak Media Release

May 9th 2016

New low as Government pumps Catalyst funds out the door in blatant pre-election pork barreling

The arts sector is reeling today at news that an extraordinary \$13m in Catalyst funds were secretly pushed out the door over the weekend just in advance of the election being called and caretaker mode beginning.

<http://arts.gov.au/catalyst/catalyst-recipients>

In total \$23,317,301 has now been spent – nearly half the \$48m allocated for the next 4 years of Catalyst operations. When Senate Estimates sat last Thursday evening the committee were only made aware of the \$10m of grants announced by Arts Minister Mitch Fifield last week.

ArtsPeak spokesperson and CEO of the National Association of Visual Arts NAVA Tamara Winikoff said:

“Our worst suspicions are now being confirmed that the government is using arts funding for thinly disguised political purposes. Of course we congratulate the successful applicants and we hope at least some of the cash splash lands in places that will help sustain artists who will be hit hard by this week’s Australia Council 4 year funding announcements. It just makes a complete mockery of all the hard work artists do in planning their programs and making applications. What is going to happen over the next four years now that half the Catalyst money is gone?”

The arts and cultural sector has been further confused by the allocation of significant monies to capital works projects such as the \$1m for the redevelopment of the Primrose Potter Australian Ballet Centre. This would appear to fall outside the remit and original intention of the Catalyst Fund.

“It simply is not appropriate for Catalyst to fund things like this regardless of how important it might be. The capacity of the sector to be adventurous and innovative is being smothered in favour of government anointed programs. Funding for capital works should come from other sources – not cripple the already scant funding available to small to medium companies and individual artists who are actually innovating. This sends a terrible message to the arts community about the government’s priorities ahead of the election”.

For further comment
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