

ArtsPeak responds to Catalyst funding results

ArtsPeak (the confederation of national peak arts organisations) has congratulated the successful applicants for Catalyst grants, only very slowly being announced by Arts Minister Mitch Fifield.

Tamara Winikoff, ArtsPeak Co-convenor said, "From a national, whole of industry perspective, ArtsPeak is pleased to see that vital investment that has been locked up for nearly twelve months is finally beginning to flow to arts projects. However, success for the Catalyst grant winners comes at a big cost for individual artists and the core operations of organisations previously sustained by grants from the Australia Council but not eligible for Catalyst support."

"The majority of the money placed under the Minister's direct control to fund Catalyst, equate to the operational funding for between 40 and 50 small to medium arts companies, which will be missing out when the Australia Council's 4 year funding results are announced next month. And there will be almost 30% fewer individual contemporary artists assisted to develop innovative work," Winikoff continued.

Nicole Beyer, ArtsPeak's other Co-convenor commented, "Because the list of Catalyst results are only being released by drip feed if at all, it presents a challenge in being able to analyse in any detail. The sector will be carefully noting how well the grant allocations meet the government's public commitment to make small to medium companies 'the priority'. So far the evidence is not there."

Beyer continued, "We'll be interested to see if what is being funded through Catalyst could just as easily have been funded by the Australia Council. This was a primary concern repeatedly raised during last year's Senate Inquiry. The introduction of a duplicate funding system flies in the face of efficient government."

ArtsPeak is concerned that the decision making process developed for Catalyst fails to meet the high standards of transparency provided by the independent peer assessment mechanism that the Australia Council prides itself on. Without an evidence-based national cultural policy in place that provides a rationale for where investment will yield optimal results, it is hard to find any coherent strategy guiding the decision-making.

ArtsPeak takes the opportunity to again call on the government to return in full the funds it cut from the Australia Council in the 2013 and 2014 budgets. It asserts that if the government wants to persevere with Catalyst, it should find new funds for the purpose. The forthcoming federal budget provides that opportunity.

For media comment please contact

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