



PAUL FLETCHER MP

Federal Member for Bradfield

Minister for Communications,
Cyber Safety and the Arts

MC20-003132

RECEIVED 19/5/20

Ms Lisa Cahill - CEO
Ms Elizabeth Espinosa - ~~Artistic Director~~ and Chair
Australian Design Centre
101-115 William Street
Darlinghurst NSW 2010

Dear Ms Cahill and Ms Espinosa

Thank you for your letter dated 8 April 2020, concerning the Australian Design Centre's application for funding to the Australia Council's Four Year Funding for Organisations 2021-2024 program, levels of Government funding to the Australia Council and the impact of COVID-19 on the arts sector.

Firstly, please accept my congratulations regarding the successful outcome of your application to the 2021-2024 Visual Arts and Craft Strategy program. This is a testament to the Australian Design Centre's position as a major leader in Australian craft and design.

I appreciate that you are disappointed that the Australian Design Centre's application to the Australia Council's Four Year Funding for Organisations 2021-2024 program was not successful. I am advised by the Australia Council that the process was highly competitive. Sadly, it is unavoidable that there will always be those who miss out in a competitive funding round.

The Morrison Government is investing almost \$750 million in the arts and cultural sector in 2019-20 – the highest amount ever. This includes a diverse range of programs and organisations across the visual arts, performing arts, literature, national collecting institutions, Indigenous arts and languages, screen and music.

The Government is committed to supporting the Australia Council to deliver strong outcomes for a vibrant arts sector. As part of the Government's investment in the sector, the Australia Council continues to receive significant funding of \$212 million in 2019-20 to support Australian artists and arts organisations.

The Government understands that the impact on the arts sector is extremely serious. All of us who care about the arts in Australia find it distressing to see museums and galleries closed, productions halted, and artists, performers and other arts sector workers out of work.

The Government is delivering substantial economic support across the economy, which includes support for workers and organisations in the cultural and creative sector. A total of \$320 billion, equivalent to 16.4 per cent of GDP, in economic measures will enhance the nation's safety net for individuals and businesses. Many businesses and organisations in the cultural and creative sector will be able to draw on these economy wide measures.

This includes the JobKeeper Payment. Under the JobKeeper payment, the Government is providing \$1,500 per fortnight per eligible employee for up to 6 months for eligible businesses. The payment will also be available to the self-employed. Businesses can also register for updates on the JobKeeper package as they become available at: www.ato.gov.au/general/gen/JobKeeper-payment/.

People who are not eligible for JobKeeper may apply for JobSeeker. The Government is temporarily expanding eligibility and removing wait periods for income support payments and establishing a new, time-limited coronavirus supplement to be paid at a rate of \$550 per fortnight. JobSeeker with the Coronavirus supplement is around 70 per cent of the national median total income for artists. To claim online, you need a myGov account linked to Centrelink. Further information is available at www.servicesaustralia.gov.au.

The Australia Council and the Australian Government have worked together to develop a response package to support artists, arts practitioners, arts groups and arts organisations in these difficult times. This includes reporting and other grant conditions relief, adjustments to Four Year Funding 2021-2024, suspending current investment programs and introducing new ones. The Australia Council has also launched the 2020 Resilience Fund to provide immediate support for the sector to survive, adapt and create, redirecting \$5 million of its existing resources to establish the Fund.

Rather than an approach of having different packages for different sectors, the Government has determined that the better approach is to have a comprehensive economy wide package. We believe that this has resulted in more funding going to the arts sector than would have occurred under a sector specific package.

The Government has recognised that, in addition to the extensive support the cultural and creative sector will receive through the JobKeeper and JobSeeker payments, there are specific needs in some parts of the sector which we have sought to address. On 9 April, the Government announced a \$27 million targeted support package for areas of the cultural and creative sector identified as being most affected by COVID-19, with dedicated financial support immediately available to Indigenous art centres, regional arts and the live music and performance industry.

Finally, both the Australia Council and the Office for the Arts are being as flexible as possible in providing reporting and other grant condition relief to organisations with existing Government funding arrangements.

This is a tough time for Australia's arts community – as it is for so many other sectors of our society. The Government's highest priority will continue to be protecting Australian lives and livelihoods. Please also check the Office for the Arts website for further information at www.arts.gov.au.

Thank you for bringing your concerns to my attention. I hope the information in this letter is of some help.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Paul Fletcher', written in a cursive style.

Paul Fletcher

11 / 2 / 2020