

# Cultural Ministers Council Communique

The 14th meeting of the Cultural Ministers Council (CMC) was held in Sydney today, Friday 11 August 2000.

The meeting was chaired by the Hon R J Carr MP, Premier and Minister for the Arts (New South Wales). Other Ministers attending included:

- Senator the Hon Richard Alston, Minister for Communications, Information Technology and the Arts (Commonwealth);
- The Hon Peter McGauran MP, Minister for the Arts and the Centenary of Federation (Commonwealth);
- Mrs Kate Carnell MLA, Chief Minister and Minister for the Arts (Australian Capital Territory);
- The Hon Matt Foley MLA, Attorney-General and Minister for the Arts (Queensland);
- The Hon Mary Delahunty MLA, Minister for Education and the Arts (Victoria);
- The Hon Mike Board MLA, Minister for Employment and Training, Youth and the Arts (Western Australia); and
- The Hon Judith Tizard MP, Associate Minister for Arts, Culture and Heritage—representing the Right Hon Helen Clark MP, Prime Minister and Minister for Arts, Culture and Heritage (New Zealand).

The Hon Jim Bacon MHA, Premier and Minister for State Development (Tasmania) was represented by Mr Jeff Kelly, Chief Executive, Department of State Development. The Hon Diana Laidlaw MLC, Minister for Transport and Urban Planning, the Arts and the Status of Women (South Australia) was represented by the Chief Executive Officer of ArtsSA, Mr Tim O'Loughlin. The Hon Peter Adamson MLA, Minister for the Arts and Museums (Northern Territory) was represented by the Hon Phil Mitchell MLA. Mayor John Hyde represented the Australian Local Government Association.

## ***Securing the Future—Major Performing Arts Inquiry Final Report***

The Commonwealth announced the establishment of the Major Performing Arts Inquiry in December 1998. The Inquiry's final report *Securing the Future* was released in December last year.

The States and the Commonwealth came to the meeting having agreed to a funding package for the companies, with the Commonwealth to provide a total of \$45 million over four years, and the States to provide \$25 million over the same period.

The Major Performing Arts Inquiry was one of the most comprehensive reviews undertaken into the subsidised performing arts anywhere in the world. The Governments of the States, Territories and the Commonwealth have recognised the importance of the arts by working together on a response to the Report. At today's meeting, the Ministers reached agreement on each of the Report's 95 recommendations to governments and the performing arts companies.

The Ministers endorsed the four key principles underpinning the Report's findings (recommendation 2.1.1) that:

- Australia should have a vibrant major performing arts sector that enriches Australian life and builds its image as an innovative and sophisticated nation;
- Australia should cost-effectively deliver broad access to the major performing arts;
- Australia should have a financially viable major performing arts sector that supports artistic vibrancy; and
- Government support for the major performing arts should be transparent and based on an understanding of the responsibilities of all parties.

The Ministers, with the exception of Queensland, acknowledged the importance of the report as the blueprint for joint action to place the major performing arts companies on an artistically vibrant and sustainable financial footing;

The Ministers also:

- commended the Inquiry team comprising Dr Helen Nugent (Chair), Mrs Catherine Walter and Messrs David Gonski and Michael Chaney on the thoroughness of the work which supports the Report's recommendations;
- noted the Major Performing Arts Fund of the Australia Council will be the Commonwealth's funding vehicle to implement, jointly with State agencies, financial packages through agreed tripartite arrangements and other assistance;
- noted the Commonwealth proposes to establish an Implementation Reference Committee for a period of 12 months to allow an exchange of stakeholder views and to monitor implementation;
- agreed the Nugent categorisation classification be amended to better reflect the aspirations of companies, as follows:
  - the 'Global' category will be called 'International';
  - the 'Niche' category will become 'Specialist'; and
  - the 'Regional Flagship' category will be termed 'State Flagship';

- endorsed the importance of enhancing access to opera by maintaining collaborative working arrangements by the opera companies in the Opera Conference partnership and broadening its charter;
- endorsed principles for the Reserves Incentives Scheme (financial contributions under the scheme will commence in 2001–02 with the Commonwealth and States, as a group, each contributing \$2 million per annum for three years);
- committed to maintaining the shared funding model recommended by the Report with allocations partially indexed on a matching basis; and acknowledged the desirability of maintaining the value of grants over time to the maximum extent possible; and
- agreed that Ministers receive, at the next Cultural Ministers Council meeting, an implementation report prepared jointly by the Commonwealth and the States.

### **Australia's small-to-medium arts organisations**

Ministers acknowledged the Major Performing Arts Inquiry Report has broader implications for other areas of the performing arts, and Ministers affirmed the important contribution small-to-medium sized arts organisations make to the cultural vitality and diversity of Australia.

These arts organisations play a central role in nurturing creative talent, developing new work for local and international audiences, and in encouraging participation in the arts at a grass roots level. Many of these organisations interact, and cooperate, with their larger counterparts, reflecting the reality of our diverse culture and the dynamics of career paths and employment opportunities in the arts.

The Ministers agreed to commission an examination of the factors influencing the artistic and financial position of Australia's small-to-medium sized performing arts organisations. A report will be prepared by a working party of officials for comprehensive consideration by Ministers at the next CMC meeting in 2001.

### **Public broadcasting in Australia**

The Ministers acknowledged the important role of public broadcasting to the cultural life of Australia and gave in-principle support to the development of a discussion paper, coordinated by Victoria, which would identify those benefits. This will include consideration of the new opportunities which will become available with the introduction of digital television.

### **Cultural Statistics**

The Ministers will commission a number of statistics projects in 2000–01, as well as continuing to support the core data sets of the Australia Bureau of Statistics (ABS) cultural statistics work—including cultural funding, Service Industry Surveys of cultural industries, cultural attendance and employment time series—and the work of the ABS National Centre for Culture and Recreation Statistics.

The projects will include:

- a proposal for collection of data on the value of Indigenous cultural production, including exports;
- data collection concerning cultural tourism; and
- an inventory of statistical data held by State arts ministries, the Australia Council and cultural peak associations.

## **Heritage collections**

Ministers noted a summary report on progress by the Heritage Collections Council (HCC). HCC was established by CMC, for the period 1997–2001, to promote excellence in the management, care and provision of access to Australia's heritage collections so, together, they reflect Australia's cultural and natural diversity.

The significant achievements of HCC include the production and distribution of reCollections: Caring For Collections Across Australia and the establishment of Australian Museums On Line (AMOL), a website providing access to over 1,000 museums across Australia.

## **Return of Indigenous Cultural Property**

Ministers noted the activities of the Return of Indigenous Cultural Property (RICP) Program. At the CMC meeting in February 1998, Ministers endorsed a strategic planning approach to the repatriation of Indigenous ancestral remains and secret/sacred objects from museums at a cost of \$3 million over three years.

The Strategic Plan provides a framework whereby Indigenous communities will be aware of all ancestral remains and secret/sacred objects from their community held in Commonwealth and State museums around Australia, and arrangements will have been made for their return where requested, by the end of 2001–02.

The RICP Management Committee recently endorsed two grant programs:

- the Museums Support Program to assist museums in the identification of ancestral remains and secret sacred objects; and
- the Community Support Program to assist communities with the return of ancestral remains and secret sacred objects.

## **New Technologies**

The Ministers received a final progress report from the New Technologies Working Party (NTWP) and commended the working party on its achievements.

The NTWP explored issues and opportunities for cultural organisations arising from the use of new technologies in the digital environment. The working party's role has been to focus on technical, legal and strategic issues for government and cultural organisations, raise awareness of those issues, generate discussion and share information.

Ministers noted that the NTWP has successfully fulfilled its objective to map the terrain and draw attention to issues that continue to have consequences for the cultural sector, and Ministers encouraged the establishment of consultative forums on the information economy and cultural e-business as a way forward.

## **Promoting the Value of the Arts**

The Australia Council, the Commonwealth Government's principal arts funding and advisory body, briefed Ministers on its strategy, Promoting the Value of the Arts.

The strategy aims to promote and expand the reach of the arts, in particular to younger Australians, through the education sector, and by encouraging greater involvement of families in arts activities.

The Ministers endorsed the cooperation of the States, Territories, local government and the Commonwealth on promoting the value of and expanding the reach of the arts, particularly for people in regional and rural Australia.

The Ministers agreed that promotion of the value and benefits of the arts is essential for both our society and the arts community itself. Western Australia will develop a proposal for mechanisms for cooperation between the Commonwealth, the States and Territories.

### **Next Meeting**

Ministers agreed that the next meeting of CMC will be hosted by Victoria, in Melbourne, in October 2001.