

Cultural Ministers Council Communique

The 18th meeting of the Cultural Ministers Council (CMC) was held in Cairns today, Friday 5 August.

The meeting was chaired by the Hon. Rod Welford MP, Minister for Education and Minister for the Arts (Queensland). Other Ministers attending included:

- Senator the Hon Rod Kemp, Minister for the Arts and Sport (Australian Government)
- The Hon Lara Giddings MHA, Minister for the Arts, Minister for Economic Development (Tasmania)
- The Hon Mary Delahunty MP, Minister for the Arts (Victoria)
- The Hon Sheila McHale MLA, Minister for Culture and the Arts (Western Australia)
- The Hon Bob Debus MP, Attorney General, Minister for the Environment and Minister for the Arts (New South Wales)
- The Hon John Hill MP, Minister Assisting the Premier in the Arts representing the Hon Mike Rann MP, Premier and Minister for the Arts (South Australia), and
- The Hon Judith Tizard MP, Associate Minister for Arts, Culture and Heritage, representing the Rt Hon Helen Clark MP, Prime Minister and Minister for Arts, Culture and Heritage (New Zealand).

Councillor Kerry Moir attended representing the Australian Local Government Association.

Meeting Summary

Ministers discussed a range of cultural issues, recognising the value of a whole-of-government approach to Indigenous services and the importance of the Return of Indigenous Cultural Property Program. Ministers also reaffirmed the value of the performing arts touring to ensure wide access to cultural activity and the significance of CMC's role in ensuring strategic national support for Australian cultural activities.

The outcomes of Ministers' discussions are outlined below.

Return of Indigenous Cultural Property (RICP) Program

Ministers endorsed the RICP Program in February 1998 to assist with the repatriation of Indigenous ancestral remains and secret sacred objects. Ministers noted a report on the status of the program, including the outcomes of the second round of funding. Ministers acknowledged the importance of the program and agreed to establish a third round of the program.

Orchestras Review

Ministers discussed the current status of the implementation of the outcomes of the Orchestras Review recognising the importance of establishing a robust framework for the future success and sustainability of Australia's symphony and pit orchestras. Ministers also approved the establishment of an Implementation Reference Group to oversee the implementation of the key recommendations of the Orchestras Review. Ministers agreed that the circumstances of individual orchestras need to be considered as part of the implementation.

Performing Arts Touring

Ministers were informed of the preliminary outcomes of the National Performing Arts Touring Consultancy. Interim findings confirm that governments are committing significant resources to touring the performing arts, with significant benefits for communities across Australia.

The Australian Government makes a considerable contribution to performing arts touring across the country through its Playing Australia program. Collectively, the states and territories are devoting substantial resources to their touring programs and initiatives, which have evolved in various ways to meet local needs. Further work will be done to identify strategic priorities for performing arts touring across all jurisdictions for consideration at the next meeting of the CMC.

Implementation of Recommendations of the Major Performing Arts Inquiry

The collaborative arrangements between the Australian and state government funding agencies to support the major performing arts companies have continued to be successful in building the financial sustainability and artistic vibrancy of the sector. Ministers noted that the first review of the Funding Model has confirmed the success of the funding arrangements and the validity of the model, while noting future challenges for companies.

Ministers also noted that the next review of the Funding Model will be completed this financial year and that state governments and companies will be consulted about the issues to be examined as part of this review.

Ministers noted that, in response to the Australian Government's proposed additional funding for the Major Performing Arts Companies (other than orchestras), the Australian Government had written to state Ministers seeking additional state contributions.

Ministers agreed that a working group of officials be established to provide ongoing advice on issues impacting on the major performing arts companies. Ministers also agreed to annually increase the minimum income level required for a company to be designated a major performing arts company.

Delivery of Indigenous Services—Whole-of-Government Approach

Members were updated on progress made concerning the implementation of the new service delivery arrangements for Indigenous Australians at the Australian Government level. Members were informed that the whole of government framework is providing the Australian Government with an opportunity to work with the states and territories to coordinate planning and delivery of Indigenous cultural and arts programs through bilateral activity. It was noted that this strategic approach provided a valuable opportunity to promote the importance of arts and culture in strengthening Indigenous communities.

Arts and Education

Ministers were informed of the progress of the joint CMC Ministerial Council for Education, Employment, Training and Youth Affairs (MCEETYA) National Statement on Education and the Arts. In February 2005, MCEETYA accepted CMC's invitation to develop a joint Ministerial statement on Education and the Arts by means of a CMC Standing Committee—AESOC steering group. Ministers were informed that the steering group has been formed and that the National Statement on Education and the Arts will be developed for the endorsement of Ministers by early 2006.

Ministers also agreed to meet with Australian Children's Television Foundation representatives to discuss states' roles in supporting the Foundation.

National Agenda for the Arts

Ministers agreed that it was fitting and timely for CMC to consider a new strategic approach to state, territory and Australian Government cooperation in support for the arts. Ministers agreed, as a first step, to establish a working group of senior officials to:

- clarify issues common to all jurisdictions;
- identify opportunities for collaborative action; and
- scope the format of a possible national agenda for the arts.

The Ministers also agreed that the working group will examine and report on the potential role of the Australian Children's Television Foundation in any national agenda on the arts.

The working group will report back to CMC by 31 March 2006.

Cultural Statistics

Ministers noted progress in implementing the CMC Statistics Working Group's (CMC SWG) program in 2004–05—including projects of importance to the cultural sector undertaken by the Australian Bureau of Statistics' National Centre for Culture and Recreation Statistics.

Ministers were pleased to approve the release of the following research reports commissioned by CMC SWG and agreed that the reports are valuable additions to cultural statistics and noted their availability on the CMC SWG website.

A Statistical Framework for the Australian Contemporary Music Sector

A comprehensive evaluation of existing data collections and sources and includes an examination of the concept of a music sector.

Social Impacts of Participation in Arts and Cultural Activities

A report which identifies, collates and evaluates current international and Australian research on the social impacts of participation in arts and cultural activity.

Cultural Tourism in Regions of Australia

A study undertaken by Tourism Research Australia which aims to quantify cultural tourism activity and expenditure at national, state/territory and regional levels.

Ministers noted that SWG is developing its priority projects for 2005–06 building on past CMC investment in priority areas. Ministers also agreed to the continuation of funding arrangements for SWG for 2005–06.

Next Meeting

Ministers expressed their appreciation to the Chair for Queensland's hospitality in hosting the meeting. Ministers agreed that the next meeting of CMC will be hosted by New Zealand in 2006, with the Australian Government as Chair.

5 August 2005