

Recommendations to the Federal Arts Ministry



It is important to acknowledge that we live in a rare time: a time when the Australian arts minister is highly active in positively developing the Australian arts sector. This is possibly the only time in Australian history when an arts minister is actually engaged with the society and so it marks a rare moment when true change for the better can happen. The opportunity should not be missed.

Key issues that negatively impact today's arts sector:

CULTURAL v INDUSTRY ARTS

1. A lack of understanding that there are two overarching divisions within the arts world:
 - a. Cultural Arts
 - b. Industry Arts

From a music point of view cultural music includes:

- world music
- most classical music
- art music
- avant garde/experimental music/sound art
- older folk music
- opera
- Any thing that furthers cultural expression above and beyond sales/audience numbers
- Music that builds specific communities

Industry music includes:

- bands
- indie music
- singer songwriter music
- film/TV music
- music in advertising
- computer games music
- popular classical
- popular world music

- hip hop
- EDM
- Anything that relies on popularity or sales
- Music for general public

Cultural and Industry arts should not be funded in the same categories. Any industry arts funding must take into account that industry is based on populism – and that if an arts product is not popular enough to be sustainable in the industry, then perhaps the production should not exist. Therefore, why does it need funding?

GRANTS PROCESSES

A second critical issue plaguing the industry is the arts grants process, which currently favours administrators who write pretty essays, rather than artists or arts companies that generate world leading art.

There are some simple fixes to this:

- bios in grants should be replaced by the About page on the website of the artist or arts company
- grants should be reframed as 'Commissions' where the artist/arts company should be funded on their folio (which should be available on their website) NOT on what they propose to do. No essay should be provided. Artists and arts companies then select a box in the grant stating what category of work they intend to produce (i.e. music concert; exhibition; new work, artistic program etc.), and then a funding amount.
- After delivering the project the applicant must then submit an acquittal with detailed expenses and documentation of the work created. The acquittal is given a mark out of 100 and then is used for future reference when the applicant reapplies for further grants.
- universities and academic should not be allowed to apply for government arts grants
- grant panel members must not be able to apply for grants for the duration of their role as a grants assessor but should be remunerated better for their commitment to the role

At the moment any citizen can successfully apply for an arts grant. It is not true that anyone can apply for a medical grant.

The applications are too open, and because they favour essay writing, they generate mostly mediocre arts outcomes, that lack skill and international relevance. Arts producers cannot sell mediocrity, and so it is wasted money.

JOLT will be offering further views publicly and in the media. [REDACTED] will be writing a book proposing changes to the sector. You will be able to take that as feedback to your recommendations processes.