



## Office of the Attorney-General

MC15/06443

Professor David Williams AM  
Spokesperson  
The Childers Group  
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18 JUN 2015

Dear Professor Williams

Thank you for your letter of 18 May 2015 to the Attorney-General and Minister for the Arts, Senator the Hon George Brandis QC, concerning the National Program for Excellence in the Arts. The Minister has asked me to reply on his behalf.

The National Program for Excellence in the Arts will commence early in the 2015-16 financial year. It will support a range of activity encompassing endowments, international touring and cultural diplomacy, and strategic initiatives. The Program will be open to applicants from across the full scope of the Australian arts and cultural heritage sector, and will prioritise the tastes and preferences of Australian audiences.

The Program was a policy considered and agreed to by the Government in the course of preparation for the 2015-16 Budget. The Program will be administered by the Ministry for the Arts and guidelines are being developed in accordance with the Commonwealth Grants Rules and Guidelines, which ensure that public funding is spent in a fair and transparent manner.

In relation to your questions regarding staffing and funding for small to medium arts companies at the Australia Council, funding decisions are a matter for the Council and they will continue to champion and invest in Australian arts – including the provision of grants to individual artists as well as small, medium and large arts organisations. In regards to staffing, that too is a matter for the Council in the context of its 2015-16 appropriation.

The Government remains committed to the important principle of funding delivered at arm's length from Government and the work of the Australia Council. The Council's appropriation for 2015-16 is \$185 million, sufficient for it to deliver on its legislated functions. It is the view of the Government that funding for the arts is best delivered through a mix of sources. The National Program for Excellence in the Arts restores an appropriate balance between these two important methods of decision making about funding. The cost of running the program will come from Departmental funds.

There will be a public announcement once the Guidelines are released, including details of the application process and eligibility criteria on the Ministry's website at <[www.arts.gov.au](http://www.arts.gov.au)>. For the latest news and updates on the Program, you may wish to subscribe to the Ministry's e-news via the website or follow the Ministry on Twitter @artsculturegov.

The responsible adviser for this matter in this Office is Mr Michael Naphali who can be contacted on (02) 6277 7300.

Thank you for taking the time to write to the Minister on this important matter.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Paul O'Sullivan', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

**Paul O'Sullivan**  
Chief of Staff