

15 September 1998

The Hon Richard Alston MP
Minister for Communications, the Information Economy and the Arts
Parliament House
Canberra ACT 2600

Dear Minister

I have pleasure in presenting to you, under Section 38 of the *Australia Council Act 1975*, the Annual Report for the Council for 1997-98.

Dr Margaret Seares
Chair of Council



The year under review has been the final year of the Australia Council's first triennial agreement with the Federal Government. It has also been, in many respects, the year in which only finetuning remained in the long process of restructuring the Council. The new funding programs are now well and truly in place, the Audience Development and Advocacy Division has made its mark strongly, and the Council itself has paid considerable attention to its enhanced role as a policy maker for the whole organisation.

During this year a number of whole-of-government issues have had a considerable impact upon the Council, perhaps the most notable being the introduction of the Commonwealth Authorities and Companies Act. As a result of the latter the Council has put in place an Audit Committee, and an Executive/Finance Committee, to ensure that key accountabilities and responsibilities are reflected in its activities.

Both the Council itself and its Funds and Board have had a number of new members join their ranks in the past twelve months. Council alone has seen a membership turnover of nearly fifty per cent since May 1997. This fluidity of membership is not entirely conducive to long-term strategic decision-making and follow-through, as it can encourage the potential to constantly re-create the wheel. It may be that the issue of coordination of membership turnover is one which could usefully be addressed in the coming year.

The Council acknowledges the continued support of the Federal Government for the Australia Council and for the arts generally.

As we move into our second funding triennium we look forward to working with you to meet the challenges of the year ahead.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Margaret Seares". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Dr Margaret Seares
Chair of Council