

A blurred, high-contrast black and white photograph of a person's face, likely a woman, looking slightly to the right. The image is heavily blurred, creating a soft, ethereal quality. A prominent white brushstroke graphic, resembling a thick, expressive line, curves across the bottom right portion of the frame. The text "strategy & policy division" is centered in the lower half of the image, overlaid on the dark background.

strategy & policy
division

The Strategy and Policy Division provides support to Council in its daily operations and coordinates the various functions and responsibilities granted to the Council under the *Australia Council Act*.

It manages Council's policy, planning, research and promotional activities; liaises with Government and arts organisations on a diverse range of issues; and provides secretariat support to Council.

The Division undertook a renewed outward looking role in 1997-98, actively engaging with a broad range of strategic

stakeholders in the arts across Australia and liaising with international counterparts.

It collaborated in several major conferences, including: a meeting of the ASEAN Committee on Culture and Information (COCI) in Malaysia as part of the Australian delegation in July; an international workshop to discuss

(clockwise from left) Associate Professor Ted Snell, Curtin University; Margaret Seares, Chair, Australia Council; Dr Geoffrey Gibbs, Director, WAAPA; Robyn Archer; Carla Delfos, Executive Director of the European League of Institutes of Arts; and Terri-ann White.
Photo: Greg Keating



cultural research agendas in the region in Singapore in September; *Cultural Crossroads: Ownership, Access and Identity* in Sydney in November; and the *Arts on the Edge* Conference in Perth in May. The latter provided an ideal opportunity to stage the first of a series of Australia Council Arts in Focus policy forums *Are we producing too many arts graduates?*. The discussion series is designed to promote an exchange of ideas about the future of the arts in Australia. The Perth forum attracted around 250 participants and comprised a panel of eminent figures from the arts – Robyn Archer, Geoffrey Gibbs, Professor Ted Snell, Terri-ann White and international guest Carla Delfos. Over 110 people accessed the simultaneous online forum. Feedback from evaluation forms distributed to participants was positive and further forums are planned.

POLICY AND PLANNING

The Division is responsible for developing and monitoring the Australia Council's corporate plan 1996-99. It also coordinates liaison with the Department of Communications and the Arts. During the year in review, input to the review of Council's triennial funding by the Department of Communications and the Arts and the Department of Finance and Administration was coordinated by the Division and ongoing triennial funding was announced in May.

The year in review saw significant attention to the relationships with States, Territories and other Commonwealth Government agencies. The Division also continued to coordinate management of the Commonwealth's special purpose budget allocations to Council for the Regional Arts, and Emerging Artists, and reporting on the Major Festivals and Contemporary Music Export Funds.

Strategic Support to the Arts Sector

The Division administers a range of projects for Council, including infrastructure support for the Australian Copyright Council and the Arts Law Centre and projects related to cross-artform development.

As part of the Division's liaison with a wide range of arts service and peak organisations, it coordinated a two-day round table meeting with a number of national arts service organisations on 2-3 June 1998.

The Division coordinated Council advice to the Government on a range of matters:

- Senate Environment, Recreation, Communications and the Arts Reference Committee Inquiry regarding access to Australia's national and cultural heritage;
- the Joint Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs, Defence and Trade Inquiry regarding Australia's relationship with ASEAN;
- House of Representatives Standing Committee on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Affairs Parliamentary Inquiry into Indigenous Businesses;
- Office of National Tourism discussion paper 'Towards a National Tourism Plan';
- Access and Equity Annual Report;
- Prime Minister's statement on Achievements for Women in 1997.

Council's partnership with the national Disability in the Arts, Disadvantage in the Arts (DADAA) network continued in 1997-98. A set of Disability Fact Packs exploring the importance of accessibility for arts and cultural organisations was published.

Copyright and Artists' Rights

The Division advocated on artists' rights and intellectual property rights issues in

1997–98 developing Council's submissions to the Government about:

- Performance Rights;
- Copyright Law Review Committee, regarding fair dealing;
- Moral Rights;
- Copyright Amendment Bill 1997;
- Copyright Reform and the Digital Agenda;
- Public Lending Right.

Youth Arts Framework

The development of a framework in relation to youth and the arts, involving key commentators and both arts and non-arts organisations, began during the year and will continue into the next financial year.

Arts for a Multicultural Australia

Implementation of the Council's Arts for a Multicultural Australia Policy produced several important results in 1997–98.

The Division released a new brochure explaining the AMA Policy and a slide kit illustrating examples of arts practice reflecting the policy.

Two audience development projects funded by the Division were completed; *The World is Your Audience*, a ground-breaking guide to audience development and cultural diversity featuring Australian case studies; and the translation of *Sunday Menu* by Pham Thi Hoai, a pilot project exploring Australian audience development in a non-English speaking background community (in this case, Vietnamese).

The Division responded on behalf of Council to the Government's National Multicultural Advisory Council's discussion paper, *Multiculturalism: The Way Forward*, in February.

Arts and Taxation Reform

Following the Prime Minister's announcement of plans to reform the

Australian tax system, KPMG was commissioned to prepare the report *Taxation Reform and the Arts*. The report supported informed and constructive discussion of the issues.

Education and the Arts

The Division liaised with key bodies such as: Culture Research Education and Training Enterprise Australia (CREATE); Department of Employment Education Training and Youth Affairs (DEETYA); Australian Council of University Art and Design Schools (ACUADS); and National Council of Heads of Tertiary Music Schools (NACHTMUS).

Research Program

The research that Council undertakes informs Council, the arts community and government, stimulating policy development, debate and community awareness of the arts.

Part of the Australia Council's contribution to arts research around Australia and internationally is to coordinate a national update of the arts research underway. Two editions of the *Arts Research in Progress* (ARIP) list were circulated internationally in the year in review.

Projects undertaken this year included:

- **Economic impact of the arts** – which documents the economic impact of the arts in Australia at a national level. The study uses official Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) data together with information from other sources and shows the growth of the arts in Australia over the past two decades.
- **Indigenous writers study** – the first stage in the Council's survey work of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander artists in all artforms except film. The project is aimed at collecting a range of statistical information to help the Australia Council with policy

development and grant programs and will complement the Council's other surveys of practising professional artists.

- **Public attitudes to the arts survey** – completed by the ABS, the survey covered a range of issues related to the arts and participation in the arts by the Australian population. This will be Council's first joint publication with the ABS.
- **Performing arts and music audience research** – is a detailed examination of existing and potential audiences for a wide range of music and the performing arts. It complements the Council's recent research into consumers of the visual arts which was published as *To Sell Art, Know your Market*.
- **Media impact on arts participation** – is a partnership with the Australian Key Centre for Cultural and Media Policy in relation to broadcasting and the arts, and arts criticism and review.

Local Government and Local Communities

The Council's partnership with the Australian Local Government Association - the Local Government Cultural Development Strategy - seeks to integrate arts and cultural development in the activities of local councils and shires across Australia. In 1997–98 the partnership published a benchmark model for arts and cultural development and undertook a training needs analysis for cultural development and planning in local government. The partnership also commissioned a guide to the outsourcing of the management of performing arts centres launched by the Australian Performing Arts Centres in July 1997.

The Division this year published an update of *Better Places, Richer Communities* presenting several critical studies of engagement of local communities with

their environment and art and design practice.

Regional Arts

As part of the implementation of the Regional Arts Fund a number of multi-State projects were supported in 1997–98, including:

- **Northern Exposure** - assisting visual arts and craft organisations in a community cultural development context across northern Queensland and the Northern Territory.
- **Country Arts Promotion** - drawing quality media coverage to regional arts activity across Australia. The first National Conference of Regional Arts in Australia scheduled for late 1998.
- **Reading the Land** - artist residencies, performances, videos, publications and exhibitions in the Murray-Darling Basin, connecting basin communities and the national community.

The Division's partnership with the Department of Primary Industry and Energy has introduced art and culture into the Commonwealth Rural Partnership through projects such as Sunrise 21 in the Sunraysia region on the NSW/Victoria border.

SECRETARIAT

The Secretariat provides support services to the Council, its Chair and General Manager, and to Council's Audit Committee, and generally acts as a point of contact regarding Council's legislative functions.

Its services include scheduling and coordinating all Council meetings and agendas and production of Council minutes. The Secretariat is responsible for Council records and the maintenance and monitoring of the membership of Council, its Funds, Board and Committees.

Other services include liaison between the Department of Communications and the Arts on Ministerial and Senate questions-on-notice, including those from the Senate Estimates Hearings. Responses to over 120 Ministerials and 24 questions-on-notice were coordinated in 1997–98. The Secretariat also coordinates Council's nominations and responses to the Honours Secretariat for people involved in the arts.

LIBRARY

The role of the Library is to develop and maintain a high standard of arts industry publications and current awareness services for Australia Council staff and the arts community. These resources now consist of books, reports, journals, videos, CDs, databases and the Internet.

The Library engaged in many reference and circulation activities in order to meet the information requirements of Australia Council staff and the arts community: 3058 inquiries were satisfied directly by the Library and its resources, while a further 132 items were borrowed through the Inter Library Loan (ILL) system for use by Library patrons. The Library made its resources available to other institutions throughout Australia by lending 140 items on ILL. Over the last year the Library purchased, catalogued and processed 1680 new titles for inclusion in the collection. The library now subscribes to approximately 300 journals. The Library has 128 Readers' ticket holders.

The Library compiled the bibliography *Multicultural Arts: a guide to resources* and *Festivals: a guide to resources*.

New Technologies

The Australia Council commissioned the report *New Technologies: English speaking Arts Agencies*, which describes the way in which those agencies are engaging with



The launch of the New Media Arts Fund was broadcast live from Melbourne on Council's website.

new technologies at the funding, policy and internal management level.

Online Communication

The Librarian played a key role during the year in working in partnership with Public Affairs to develop the Council's website as described in the next section. Part of this initiative was to assist the Arts Funding and the Corporate Services Divisions to ensure that applicants are able to complete grants application forms online using the freely available software Acrobat Reader.

PUBLIC AFFAIRS

The Council's Public Affairs Section implements strategies to enhance awareness and appreciation of the role of the Australia Council in arts development. The section maintains a close liaison with the rest of Council, the arts community, the government and the media to identify, advise and act on promotional and informational needs and opportunities. It also monitors and responds to relevant issues raised in the media.

A total of 54 media releases announcing grants and other Council initiatives were distributed during 1997–98 and Public Affairs responded daily to requests for

information and interviews on a range of issues. There was extensive media coverage in October with an announcement of \$24 million in grants across artforms, heralding the transition from Program grants to Triennial funding. The year has also seen considerable media interest in the financial performance of the major organisations, taxation reform and the arts and perceived threats to public funding for the arts. Early into her term as Chair, Dr Seares gained widespread media interest in the launch of the research publication, *Artswork*.

During the year under review, Public Affairs placed greater emphasis on expanding contact with the ethnic media. Deputy Chair of Council, Lex Marinos, and the General Manager hosted around 50 representatives from the ethnic media, to launch a new booklet profiling the Arts for a Multicultural Australia Policy and *The World is Your Audience*, a landmark resource on audience development and cultural diversity.

A multifaceted promotion of Council's Partnerships and Commissions grant categories began in July. *Your Business + Our Support + Australian Artists = The Creative Edge* was the key promotional slogan for the campaign, which involved the mass direct mailout of an information brochure to arts and non-arts sectors, selected national advertising and media coverage in arts and non-arts media. The campaign generated more than 500 requests for further information.

A major achievement for Public Affairs was the incorporation of live Internet coverage of major Council events to enable national and international involvement.

A formal launch of the New Media Arts Fund in Melbourne in May by the Minister for the Arts, Senator Alston, was reported nationally by TV News in four States, most major daily newspapers and selected information technology publications. The launch was accessible live to an international audience via Council's website. The launch website included an online press kit, with copies of the Minister's speech, high resolution downloadable images, press releases and background information on the new media artists involved in the launch.

In keeping with the new corporate design look established in 1996-97, the Australia Council website was redesigned – involving a new front page, new design elements and navigation icons and a revised structure for some directories.

Public Affairs again managed a considerable publishing schedule, with a total of 21 publications released during the year, covering diverse issues such as marketing and corporations law. The Council's corporate look was reinterpreted to produce a distinctive

cultivating our culture, an Australia Council general information brochure, one of 21 publications produced during the year in review.



suite of corporate publications, beginning with the 1998 Grants Handbook and Closing Dates Calendar. See page 162 for the full list of publications issued in 1997–98.

Research and development work was undertaken for the Council's new general information brochure, *Cultivating our Culture*, video and archival material for publication in preparation for the Council's 30th anniversary in mid-1998, and as the first stage of a wider arts promotion strategy by Council.

A new information publication for craftspeople, *Craftwise*, was researched and produced as part of the Council's response to the recommendations of its Craft Reference Group.

Advertising and Market Research

The Council uses print advertising for the notification of closing dates, the introduction of new programs, and invitations to potential applicants to meet with Council/Board/Fund members and staff at forums and briefings.

During 1997–98 advertisements announcing the 1998 grant closing dates were run in nine metropolitan daily newspapers as well as two Indigenous and ten non-English speaking community newspapers. National coverage was given to the availability of the new Grants Handbook. Expenditure on such advertising totalled \$127,277 for the year in review. In a campaign geared to raise the level of awareness in the corporate sector of the Partnerships and Commissions grant categories, advertising was placed in the Business section of *The Weekend Australian* and *The Australian Financial Review*.