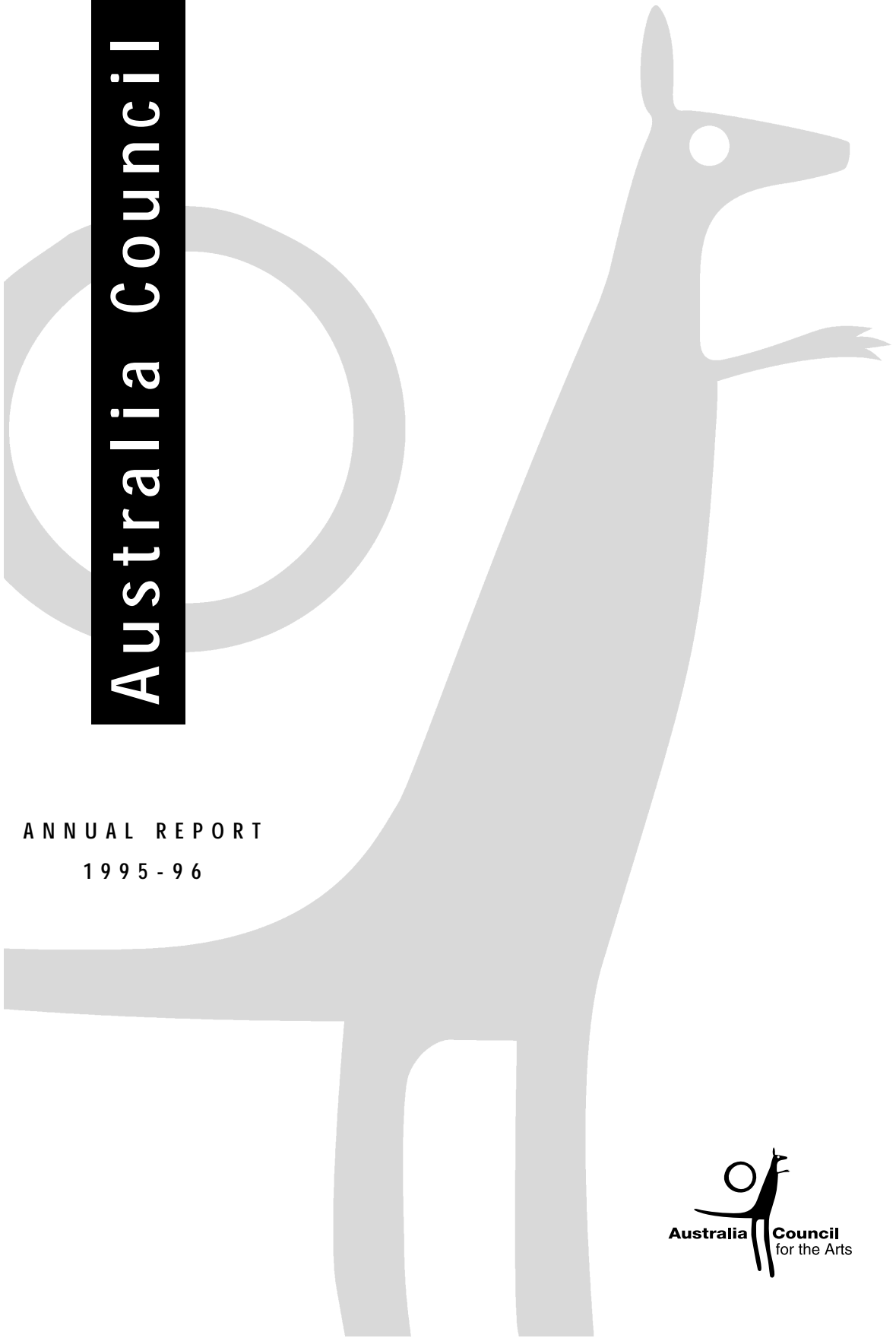


Australia Council

ANNUAL REPORT
1995 - 96



Australia Council
for the Arts



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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 1975*. Policy, planning and research, public affairs, library, arts infrastructure support and the Council's Secretariat are all part of this Division.

The Division (formerly Strategy and Communications Unit) was established in April 1996 as part of the restructure of Council. At the same time, responsibility for international policy and promotion was moved to Audience Development and Advocacy Division, and the Secretariat and Library were transferred to Strategy and Policy from Corporate Services Division. The position responsible for the Council's Arts for a Multicultural Australia policy was shifted from the Community Cultural Development Unit to the Policy and Planning Section of the Strategy and Policy Division.

Strategy and Policy played a pivotal role this year in coordinating the reforms undertaken in peer assessment, including the introduction of the two-tier structure and the establishment of the Register of Peers. The streamlining of grant programs and application processes was facilitated through Strategy and Policy, as was the transfer of functions and restructuring within the organisation.

The Division has also been instrumental in preparing the Council's new Corporate Plan for the period 1996-99, which was endorsed by Council at its June 1996 meeting.

Secretariat

The Secretariat provides support services to the Council, its Chair and General Manager, and generally acts as a point of contact regarding Council.

Its services include scheduling and coordinating all Council meetings and agendas, liaison with the Minister and his office and with the Department of Communications and the Arts, and consultation with State and Territory arts

ministers. The Council communicates regularly with Members of Parliament through the Secretariat's provision of information about grants in their electorates. During 1995-96 responses to 170 ministerials were coordinated.

The Secretariat also manages the Register of Peers and was responsible for designing the database, developing guidelines for the use of peers, and compiling a manual to give peers an overview of the Australia Council including its decision-making structure, the role of peers, code of conduct and conflict of interest.

During the year the Secretariat liaised extensively with the Attorney-General's Department on a range of issues including:

- an audit of grant assessment procedures and practices;
- implementation of the two-tier structure following the peer assessment review;
- delegation of powers under the Australia Council Act; and
- development of the Register of Peers.

The Secretariat provides advice and coordinates requests for information and reviews of decisions under both the Commonwealth Government's administrative law provisions and Council's own internal review mechanisms. In 1995-96 Secretariat handled two requests under the Freedom of Information Act, one of which was subsequently withdrawn; one request for a statement of reasons pursuant to section 13 of the Administrative Decisions (Judicial Review) Act; and seven requests for internal review of decision. A Freedom of Information request which proceeded to the Administrative Appeals Tribunal and an Administrative Decisions (Judicial Review) Act request which went to the Federal Court were both dropped by the applicant.

Details of information requested under Section 8 of the Freedom of Information Act are provided at the end of this report, together with the Council's Freedom of Information statistics (see page 118).

Policy and Research

Strategic research that is directly useful – for example, in assisting to artists and arts organisations to better understand existing and potential audiences – is a critical contribution Council makes to the arts. During 1995-96 the results of a number of research projects were published. These were:

- D *Books Who's Reading Them Now?*, a study carried out for the Council by the Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS), examines the buying, borrowing and reading of books by Australians. The report showed that there has been a marked growth in the purchase of Australian books over the last 20 years, and that Australian readers are overwhelmingly positive in their opinions of Australian writers.
 - D *Arts and Disability*, a report by Des Walsh and Juliet London, describes the barriers to intellectual and physical access to the arts experienced by people with a disability, the appropriateness of existing infrastructures, and the implications for arts organisations of the *Disability Discrimination Act 1992*. The report has been widely applauded and its recommendations form the basis for the Council's disability action plan.
 - D *Arts and Cultural Attendance by International Visitors 1993 and 1994* provides data, based on the International Visitor Survey conducted by the Bureau of Tourism Research, on attendance at cultural activities by country /region of residence, purpose of visit and length of stay in Australia, frequency of attendance, age, gender and total visits for each type of activity.
 - D *Older Australians and the Arts*, prepared by the Australian Pensioners and Superannuants Federation, examines attitudes of older people to the arts, their participation levels and barriers to participation, and includes recommendations addressed mainly to arts providers and funding authorities.
 - D *Danger! Artists at Work*, the second edition of the Australia Council's manual on occupational health and safety in the arts, published by DW Thorpe.
- A number of research projects were completed or commenced in 1995-96 and reports of these are expected to be released in the forthcoming financial year:
- D the fifth edition of the Council's compendium of arts statistics, *The Arts: Some Australian Data*, prepared by the ABS;
 - D a survey of the type and frequency of arts festivals in Australia, their attendances, artist engagements, staffing, income and expenditure;
 - D a major study of consumers and potential consumers of visual arts and fine crafts;
 - D *Open Up!*, a joint study with the Powerhouse Museum on ways to promote greater access to museums and art museums by people of non-English speaking background, Aboriginals and Torres Strait Islanders;
 - D a research project, in collaboration with the National Culture/Recreation Statistics Unit of the ABS, on Indigenous artists in Australia; and
 - D a statistical report on arts employment and unemployment in Australia.

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



The Australia Council's General Manager, Michael Lynch, attended a Forum for English-speaking Arts Council Directors in Washington DC, USA, on 5-7 June 1996. Left to right (back row): Michael Lynch; Jane Alexander, National Endowment for the Arts; Seona Reid, Scottish Arts Council; Chris Mangin, Creative New Zealand; Mary Allen, Arts Council of England; Brian Ferran, Arts Council of Northern Ireland; (front row): Adrian Munnely, Arts Council of Ireland; Roch Corrier, The Canada Council; Emyr Jenkins, Arts Council of Wales.

- Australian Network for Art and Technology to assist the development of its services on a national basis;
- the second Arts and New Media Conference, held in Adelaide 29 September 1995.

Other areas of policy activity include:

- Arts and Education. The Division was responsible for the Australia Council's submissions to the Senate Inquiry into Arts Education and to the first National Affiliation of Arts Educators Conference in Canberra, 14-15 October 1995.
- Arts for a Multicultural Australia (AMA). At its December 1995 meeting, the Australia Council endorsed new policy principles as a framework for an AMA policy for the period 1996-99. These were developed by the Council's Multicultural Arts Committee (ACMAC) after a thorough process of consultation. An AMA Action Plan incorporating the new policy principles was endorsed at the Council's May 1996 meeting.

- Arts and Disability. Following release of the *Arts and Disability* report the Australia Council prepared an Arts and Disability Action Plan which has been well received across the arts community and was commended in the first Progress Report on the Commonwealth Disability Strategy. A partnership has been formed between the Council and the Disability in the Arts, Disadvantage in the Arts, Australia (DADAA) network to carry out the plan.

Library

The Library acts as an information source for Australia Council staff and the arts community by developing and maintaining a high standard of arts industry reference publications and current awareness services.

The Library engaged in many reference and circulation activities in assisting Council staff and other users to meet their information requirements: 2,064 inquiries were satisfied directly by the Library and its resources, while a further 200 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 196 items on ILL. Over the last year the Library purchased 686 new titles for inclusion in the collection and subscribed to approximately 350 journals.

The service provided by the Library to its users has dramatically improved since May 1996 due to the introduction of the new library management system, Horizon. The result has been a conversion of all computerised and manual functions such as searching facilities to one centrally controlled system. Users can access the new database via an Online Public Access Computer (OPAC) available in the Library. In the coming year, access to an OPAC facility will be extended to staff of the Australia Council via the Intranet.

An initial group of Australia Council staff received basic Internet training provided by the Library Manager. A program of Advanced Internet training of 50 staff members will commence in July 1996, supervised by the Library Manager.

Two bibliographies have been updated by Library staff in the year 1995-96. *Festivals: a Guide to Resources* and *Cultural Policy, Planning and Development: a Bibliography*.

Public Affairs

The role of the Council's Public Affairs Section is to enhance awareness and appreciation of Australian arts and the role of the Australia Council in arts development. The section maintains close liaison with the rest of Council, the arts community, and the media to identify, advise and act on promotional and information needs and opportunities. It also monitors and responds to relevant issues raised in the media and provides strategic advice.

A total of 110 press releases announcing grants and other Council initiatives were distributed during 1995-96 and Public Affairs responded daily to media requests for information and interviews on a range of issues. Media attention was particularly intense in the latter half of 1995, when public debate within the arts community coincided with announcements on the restructuring of the Council and its grants programs.

Council determined to maintain its course of public consultation and to invite feedback from artists, arts organisations and the community in a series of public forums. These were organised and promoted by Public Affairs. The first round of forums were held in late 1995, followed by a second round in April and May 1996. The briefings attracted widespread positive media coverage.

An information kit on Council's restructure – comprising folder, brochure, calendar, and the completely revamped *Australia Council Grants Handbook 1996* – was produced and distributed to media nationally.

Twenty other publications were released during the year, including three editions of the Council's newsletter, *Artforce*, six artform newsletters, and brochures promoting New Media Arts Fund initiatives and the Performing Arts Market. The reader survey of *Artforce*, distributed in June 1995, found that of the readers who commented on the usefulness of the magazine, 85% were positive. The majority of respondents were also satisfied with the layout, design and focus of the magazine. The survey served a dual purpose in that it enabled the *Artforce* mailing list to be updated.

The ceremony to announce the Australia Council Awards and the Young Australian Creative Fellowships brought together prominent artists, arts professionals, politicians and the media to recognise the outstanding contributions made by these creative Australians. Public Affairs organised and publicised the ceremony, which was held at Melbourne's Old State Theatre on 2 November (see The Year in Review). The Section was also involved in the official launch of the Australia Foundation for Culture and the Humanities in Melbourne on 17 August 1995.

Public Affairs managed the information design and compiled all the content for the Council's new home page on the Internet's World Wide Web. The site includes general and artform specific information on Council, closing dates, media releases, as well as links to other arts-related sites.

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 1995-96, advertisements announcing the 1996 closing dates for the newly created Funds were run in eleven different languages in non-English speaking newspapers, and national coverage was given to the launch of the new Grants Handbook and the Register of Peers. Expenditure on such advertising totalled approximately \$131,870 for the year. No creative or campaign advertising was undertaken.



The research report *Books: Who's Reading Them Now?* generated a lot of media interest at its launch in November 1995.

The use of mailing houses is limited to the distribution to applicants, the media and the public of newsletters, the Grants Handbook, research reports and other information on Council activities. Expenditure on these services, excluding postage, was \$3,916 for the year under review.