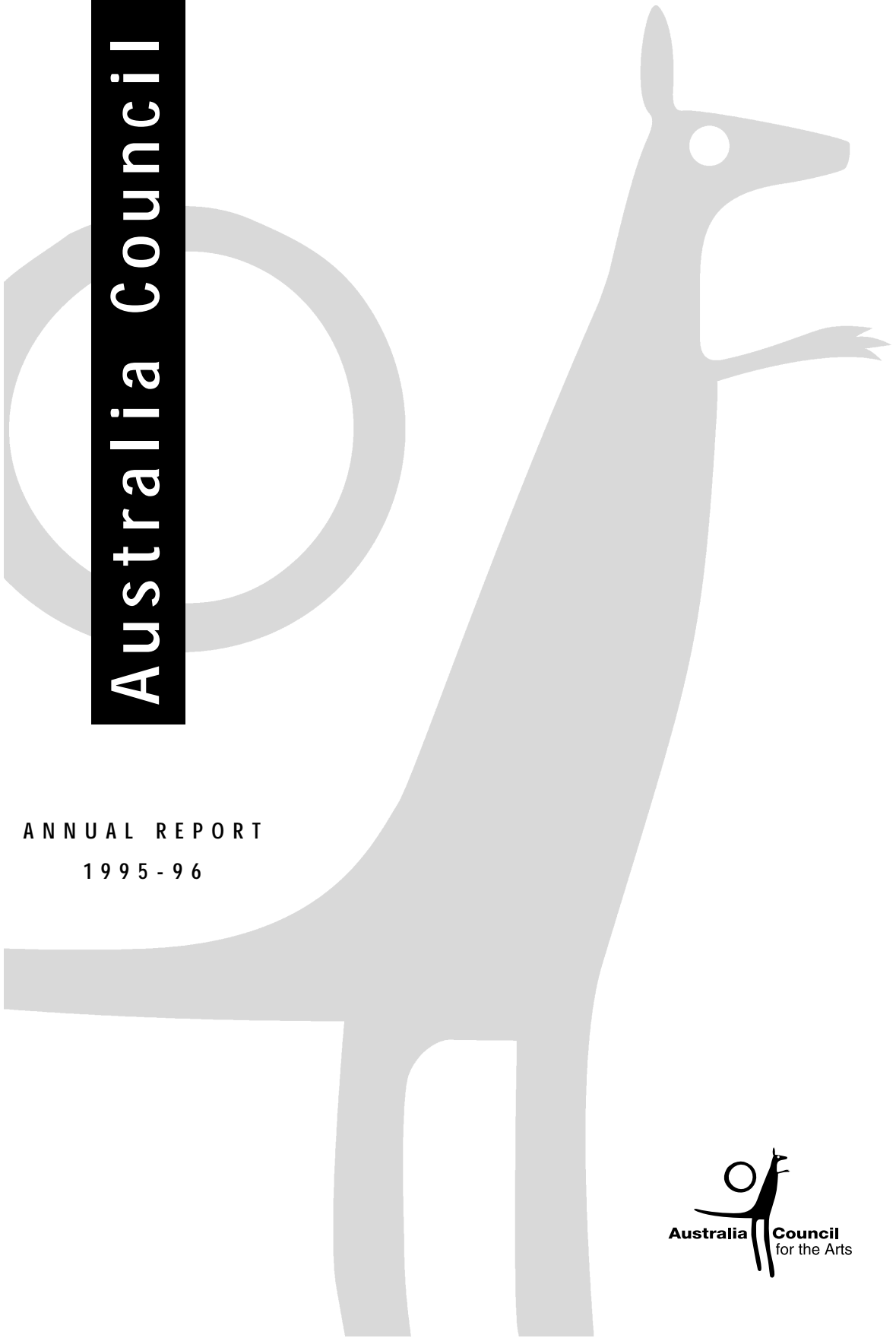


Australia Council

ANNUAL REPORT
1995 - 96





| | |
|-----------|---|
| 4 | Letter from Chair of Council |
| 6 | Functions |
| 7 | Profile |
| 9 | Organisation Chart |
| 10 | Corporate Overview |
| 16 | The Year in Review |
| 21 | Arts Funding |
| 22 | Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Arts |
| 26 | Community Cultural Development (including Community, Environment, Art and Design) |
| 30 | Literature |
| 33 | Major Organisations |
| 35 | Performing Arts |
| 41 | New Media Arts |
| 43 | Visual Arts/Craft |
| 45 | Audience Development and Advocacy |
| 45 | National Access |
| 45 | National Festival of Youth Arts |
| 46 | Marketing Initiatives |
| 46 | Arts Export |
| 47 | International Promotion |
| 49 | Strategy and Policy |
| 49 | Secretariat |
| 50 | Policy and Research |
| 51 | Library |
| 52 | Public Affairs |
| 54 | Corporate Services |
| 54 | Finance |
| 55 | Central Records |
| 56 | Information Technology |
| 56 | Staffing |
| 59 | Financial Statements |
| 60 | Independent Audit Report |
| 61 | Principal Officers' Statement |
| 62 | Financial Statements |

| | |
|------------|---|
| 75 | Grants Lists and Statistical Information |
| 76 | Summary of Arts Support Funding |
| 78 | Grants Lists |
| 78 | Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Arts |
| 83 | Community Cultural Development |
| 87 | Community, Environment, Art and Design |
| 88 | Literature |
| 97 | Major Organisations |
| 98 | Performing Arts |
| 106 | Visual Arts/Craft |
| 112 | Council Programs |
| 114 | Analysis of Funding |
| 116 | Staff Statistics |
| 118 | Freedom of Information Section 8 Statement |
| 121 | Publications and Archival Films |
| 122 | Index |

Parliamentary Reporting Requirements

| | |
|-----|---------------------------------|
| 4 | Letter of Transmission |
| 4 | Responsible Minister |
| 6 | Enabling Legislation |
| 6 | Functions and Objectives |
| 9 | Staff and Structure |
| 11 | Membership |
| 15 | Contact Officer |
| 53 | Advertising and Market Research |
| 54 | Internal and External Scrutiny |
| 56 | Industrial Democracy |
| 58 | Occupational Health and Safety |
| 58 | Equal Employment Opportunity |
| 59 | Financial Statements |
| 60 | Independent Audit Report |
| 116 | Staffing Information |
| 118 | Freedom of Information |
| 122 | Index |

The Australia Council is responsible for its own administration, subject to the *Australia Council Act 1975* and requirements applying generally to statutory authorities.

The Corporate Services Division works to maintain an efficient and effective administrative and operational basis to support the work of the Australia Council and its staff. It is responsible for the development and administration of financial policy and procedures, the fair and equitable management of staff, and the efficient and effective management of the accounts, records, information and physical resources of the Australia Council.

The Division's success is indicated by the steady development of new and improved systems to manage Council's resources in line with relevant legislation, guidelines and budget constraints.

Finance

1995-96 marked the commencement of rolling triennial funding arrangements for the Australia Council. These arrangements enable the Australia Council to operate in an atmosphere of stability and predictability, and to make continuing commitments to a larger number of artists and arts organisations. With a greater knowledge of future funding levels, artists and arts organisations are in a better position to undertake more accurate forward planning and to enter into longer-term and more efficient financial commitments.

Of the allocation of \$72.9 million appropriated from the Federal Budget in 1995-96, \$64.0 million (87.8 per cent) was used for direct financial support for arts activities, and the balance of \$8.9 million (12.2 per cent) was used for other support for arts activities, administration and general purposes.

An analysis of support for arts activities is given in the statistical tables at the end of this report.

Apart from the parliamentary appropriation, Council's budget was supplemented from other sources – returned funds from prior year grants, interest earnings, proceeds of sale of publications, and special purposes grants. These totalled \$2.7 million in 1995-96.

The Council strives for sound financial management and practices, and effective and efficient use of resources. Financial control systems and procedures are constantly reviewed. Financial performance is regularly monitored.

These processes ensure the highest standards in accountability and best practice in the administration of funding processes. However, it should be noted that during 1995-96 Council's implementation of the new two-tiered system of peer assessment concurrently with the three-tiered system resulted in unavoidable but necessary one-off increases in administration expenses.

Internal and External Scrutiny

KMPG Peat Marwick Chartered Accountants were retained as internal auditors for the year under review. In accordance with Council's internal audit program, systems testing was completed for disbursements, payroll, receipts, grants, grant acquittals, non-current assets and petty cash. Reviews of the internal information technology controls were also undertaken.

The audit findings confirmed that Council's internal controls were effective and satisfactory.

The accounts and records of the financial transactions of the Council and the records relating to assets of the Council were inspected and audited by the Australian National Audit Office, in pursuance of section 39(1) of the Australia Council Act. The results of the inspection and audit were satisfactory.

Information Privacy Principles Audit

To more fully comply with the information principles contained in the *Privacy Act 1988*, the following key issues identified by the Commissioner in a privacy control environment audit in March 1995 have been addressed in the year under review:

- collection of irrelevant and unnecessary information;
- use of fictitious identity in computer system test and training environments and procedural manuals;
- preservation of confidentiality of personal information in relation to the use of acknowledgment cards; and
- privacy awareness and training.

Risk Assessment/Fraud Control

Early in the year, Council conducted a review on its risk assessment and arrangements for fraud control and updated its Risk Assessment Reports prepared in 1991 and 1993. The review confirmed that the Council's vulnerability to fraud was low.

The Council's Fraud Control Plan was submitted to the Commonwealth Law Enforcement Board and the Minister for the Arts in December 1995, and after clarification was provided on matters raised by the Board, the plan was officially approved in March 1996.

Procedures for fraud investigation, and a Fraud Control Plan implementation program have since been developed.

While the Council is satisfied with its internal controls currently in place, it will continue to review procedures and controls to ensure that the possibility of fraud is further minimised.

Central Records

Central Records Section, an integral part of the Corporate Services Division, is responsible for records management and mail and courier services.

As the Council's central information area, Central Records Section:

- registers details of individual grant applications in the database;
- manages the safe handling, movement, retrieval, storage and disposal of documents and records related to grant application, assessment, decision and acquittal processes;
- implements a program of cyclical maintenance to ensure that records are ready for reference as and when required, and that surplus or unwanted material is disposed of in accordance with the Archives Act; and
- ensures that the right information arrives in the right hands at the right time.

During the financial year, Central Records Section registered and created 5,713 grant applications and related files. It also registered over 1,794 grant acquittals.

Information Technology

The implementation of new technologies and the modification and upgrading of the Council's computerised systems to support the strategic initiatives of the Council saw another challenging year for the Information Technology Section.

The focus was to enhance management information systems through the use of new technologies, and to provide staff with training in the use of available information technology.

A new finance system (OpenPlus) became operational in February 1996 after months of trial and parallel running. This is a functional, integrated modular system, and includes an interface with the grant processing system, allowing for full integration between financial transactions and statistical data on grant applications and assessments.

A specially designed Register of Peers database was developed. The system includes the facility to search and select peers when their services are required, and enables selection to be made with reference to their artform skills and experience as well as their geographic location.

A database system to record and dispatch the Grants Handbook and application forms was developed and implemented as part of the Council's ongoing commitment to improve the grant administration process.

The Council was connected to the Internet in January 1996 via a 64kbit/sec ISDN semi-permanent link. A Web server for the Council's home page was also established, and the site was launched on 3 April 1996.

Staffing

Staff of the Council are employed under the *Australia Council Act 1975*. The average staffing level for the 1995-96 financial year was 115.2, excluding the Australia Foundation for Culture and the Humanities which was incorporated as a wholly owned Commonwealth company in January 1996. Permanent staff turnover for the year was 24%, in comparison to the previous

financial year of 21%. This indicates a consistently high trend during this period which was in part a result of the restructure of Council following recommendations from the Cordiner King Hever management review.

In response to the review, a series of consultative forums were held with staff, and a three phase interim staffing structure was proposed and implemented. Council teams were involved in all stages of the restructure, the development of the new grants handbook and the staffing changes. Council's structure has been streamlined from seven staffing units to the four Divisions of Arts Funding, Strategy and Policy, Audience Development and Advocacy, and Corporate Services. The restructure will continue during the new financial year to accommodate any budget changes.

These changes, coupled with normal turnover of Council staff, have meant that recruitment activity has been high throughout the latter part of the financial year.

Industrial Democracy

A Joint Consultative Council (JCC) works to foster good working relationships between staff and management. It has equal representation of union and management and meets quarterly. Consultation occurred on a wide range of topics, including staffing, equal employment opportunity, occupational health and safety, and general human resource issues.

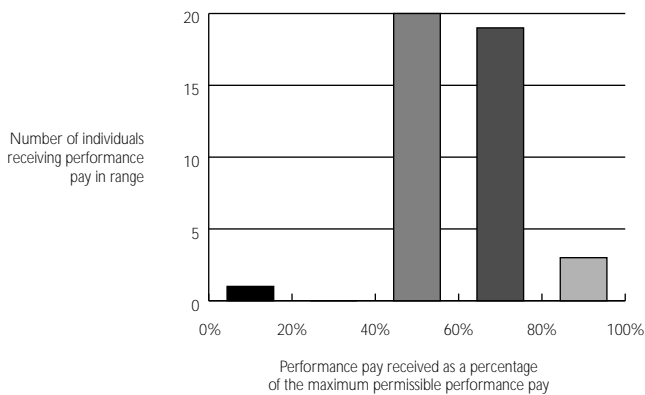
During the financial year the JCC met more regularly to successfully negotiate Council's Workplace Bargaining Agreement which operates until December 1996. The Agreement included changes to employment conditions which focus on more 'family friendly' work practices and three staggered pay increases to bring Council in line with the Australian Public Service. The increases provided for 2% from July 1995, 1.6% from March 1996 and 2% from October 1996.

Performance Appraisal

Council has a performance appraisal scheme for both senior executive service (SES) and senior officer (SO) staff which has been in operation for several years. In Council's Workplace Bargaining Agreement changes were made to the provision of performance pay for both SES and SO staff. A modified pay scheme was introduced for senior executive staff, with the bulk of allocated performance pay monies incorporated into base rates of pay. Negotiations are continuing on whether a similar scheme will be introduced for senior officers.

Performance pay was paid during the financial year for the last appraisal cycles which finished prior to the introduction of the above changes. A total of 43 senior staff were eligible for performance pay and an aggregate amount of \$96,296 paid. Of the overall aggregate amount \$51,296 was paid to 33 senior officers and \$45,000 to ten senior executive staff and the General Manager. Of the payments made, five were on a pro-rata basis for senior executive staff and 15 for senior officers.

The graph shows the distribution of recipients according to the percentage permissible pay received.



Staff Development and Training

The Council has continued to show a firm commitment to staff development and has spent 3.1% of its annual payroll on eligible training expenses. This resulted in a total of 290 staff days attendance at both internal and external training courses.

Attention was focused on developing skills in the new systems across Council, including training in Council's new financial system OpenPlus, Access database training for the new Register of Peers database, and training in use of on-line fax facilities and the Internet.

Specific training was held for senior Council staff in policy formulation and advice, and time management courses again proved popular with other staff. The usual array of in-house courses in advanced word processing, induction and registry database continued.

Nine staff were approved students under the Studybank scheme for the 1996 academic year, six of whom were also successful Bursary allocation recipients. Three staff members from the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Arts Unit participated in 'block study' courses at Macquarie University and Sydney University Cumberland Campus.

Another staff member has been successful in obtaining an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Commission Professional Study Grant for 1996 to study full time at James Cook University Townsville.

The Council encourages all staff in their pursuit of personal and professional development activities.

Occupational Health and Safety (OH&S)

The OH&S Committee meets on a quarterly basis and is composed of two management representatives, two OH&S representatives and an adviser from the Property and Services area. The Committee takes responsibility for reporting to the Joint Consultative Council and for ensuring that staff have a forum to voice concerns and identify any potential hazards.

With the support of the OH&S Committee, regular safety audits were introduced to ensure a proactive and responsible approach to health and safety issues. The audits identified a number of potential problems which were responded to in a timely fashion.

In addition, ergonomic information sessions have become a regular feature of the Council's staff induction program and new staff receive an individual ergonomic assessment from an experienced occupational therapist. All staff are invited to refresh their knowledge of ergonomic 'best practice' at these sessions.

As part of Council's ongoing commitment to staff services, links with an accredited staff counselling service have been maintained. All Council staff have access to an Employee Assistance Program run by Workcare Australia and are offered free, confidential counselling on a range of personal and work related issues.

Equal Employment Opportunity (EEO)

The EEO Committee is a union and management initiative comprising representatives from management and the union, an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander representative, a multicultural representative, and the Council's EEO coordinator.

The Council supported a broad range of activities including NAIDOC week events. The Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Arts Unit was nominated for the 1996 Public Service Commission Equality Awards for coordinating these events, and staff have been encouraged to look at other EEO and family friendly initiatives for Council to undertake.

As part of our Workplace Bargaining Agreement 1995-96 the Council is introducing a new purchased leave system which will allow staff to extend their leave entitlements to enable family and personal responsibilities to be met.

The Council has again exceeded the APS-wide expectations for employment of EEO targeted groups:

- Women currently comprise 71% of Council staff and numbers are evenly distributed in all Units and at all classifications;
- 100% of all current SES staff are women;
- 17.3% of staff identified as having non-English speaking backgrounds;
- 9.5% of staff are identified as being Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islanders;
- 3.4% of staff are identified as having a disability.