



Work Environment

IMAGE: Alexandra Harrison and Rowan Marchingo in *Legs on the Wall's Together*. Created and performed by the artists, and directed by Rowan Marchingo. *Legs on the Wall* receives Key Organisation funding from the Theatre Board. PHOTO: Daniel Bereholak.

Work Environment

The Council's Corporate Goal 6 (see page 39), together with a staff survey and the negotiation of the Certified Agreement, brought people and the workplace into the spotlight in 2002–03. The Council is strongly committed to providing a workplace that supports its people in working towards its mission, vision, goals and policies.

Consultation

Cooperation and consultation are key contributors to the climate and culture of the Australia Council.

The Workplace Consultative Forum (WCF) and Staff Survey are the key communication and feedback mechanisms. The WCF exists to support consultation, discussion and teamwork between management and staff. It comprises four elected staff representatives and four management representatives. During the year, the WCF Charter was reviewed—and agreed—in tandem with negotiations for the next Certified Agreement.

An online staff survey identified a range of issues that were of concern to employees. To clarify issues, define and prioritise actions, the Council's senior management discussed the survey results with divisional groups throughout the organisation. Issues have been systematically addressed and are regularly reported. The impact of these responses will be assessed in an upcoming survey.

Certified Agreement

The Council's employees have the opportunity to influence the human resources policies and practices of their organisation, and the Council sought input from across the organisation during negotiations for the next Certified Agreement. Following extensive consultation, in principle agreement was reached on the 'entitlements

based' Certified Agreement between the Council and its employees. As a result of the Certified Agreement, the Council will be well positioned to meet the changing needs of government and the arts sector.

Occupational Health and Safety and Workplace Diversity

The Occupational Health and Safety (OH&S) policy was updated during the year, as were the Emergency and Evacuation and Return to Work procedures and policies. Employees continue to use the range of initiatives that enhance the work environment, including ergonomic assessment of workstations, safety audits, eyesight testing, the Fit for Work scheme and access to an employee assistance program.

The OH&S Committee, comprising staff and management representatives, met on a quarterly basis in 2002–03 and oversaw a range of health and safety initiatives. There were no accidents or dangerous occurrences that required the giving of notice under section 68 of the *Occupational Health and Safety (Commonwealth Employment) Act 1991*.

In 2002–03 the Council had a strong representation of staff from Equal Employment Opportunity (EEO) targeted groups across all levels. Data drawn from staff who volunteered the information shows that 75 per cent of all

employees are female; 21.5 per cent have a non-English speaking background; 4.4 per cent identify as Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islanders; and 3.4 per cent are people with a disability.

The Council's recruitment, employment and professional development policies and procedures meet the requirements of the *Disability Discrimination Act 1992* (DDA).

The Council is committed to family-friendly practices and provides for conditions that cater to the needs of our diverse workforce. To address concerns raised by staff, the Council has a range of mechanisms available, which were outlined in its recently released Guidelines for Resolving Work-Related Issues.

Commonwealth Disability Strategy

The Australia Council plays four roles under the Commonwealth Disability Strategy: policy adviser, purchaser, provider and employer. The Council is committed to improving performance in all four roles.

Policy adviser

In the role of policy adviser, the Council seeks to reflect the current and changing needs of people with disabilities in the arts sector. It does so by actively engaging with the national Disability in the Arts, Disadvantage in the Arts Australia (DADAA) network.

In developing new or revised proposals and programs, the Council management team considers the impact on the lives of people with disabilities prior to a decision. The input of DADAA and other representatives is part of the consultation and other input that shapes the Council's annual suite of programs.

The Council sees people with disabilities as potential clients (also known as customers or stakeholders) in all Australia Council programs, and maintains a relationship with DADAA members to involve people with disabilities in consultation about policies and programs.

The Australia Council's *Support for the Arts Handbook* is made available in accessible formats as close as possible to the time of publication.

Purchaser

The Australia Council is first known for its purchasing or funding role. The Council supports artists and public, private and not-for-profit organisations, to enrich the cultural life of all Australians. Where possible, the Council ensures that purchase specifications and funding contracts require providers to do everything reasonably possible to comply with the *Disability Discrimination Act 1992* (DDA).

Provider

The Council's service charter is a standing item for management. Having reworked the Council website to ensure compliance with Priority One accessibility ratings, the Council is embarking on a major redevelopment of its online services, which will offer greater opportunities for more accessible services.

Employer

The Australia Council is also an employer, with responsibility to ensure that recruitment, employment and professional development policies and procedures comply with the DDA.

The Council now has baseline data against which future performance can be compared across all these areas.

Freedom of Information Section 8 Statement

Information required to be published in the annual report by Section 8 of the *Freedom of Information Act 1982* (FOI Act) is contained in the body of this report as well as in this section.

Powers

Under Section 6 of the *Australia Council Act 1975*, the Council has the power to do all things that are necessary or convenient to be done in connection with the performance of its functions and, in particular, has power:

- (a) to enter into contracts
- (b) to erect buildings
- (c) to occupy, use and control any land or building owned or held under lease by Australia and made available for the purposes of the Council
- (d) to acquire, hold and dispose of real or personal property

- (e) to accept gifts, devises and bequests made to the Council, whether on trust or otherwise, and to act as trustee of moneys or other property vested in the Council upon trust
- (f) to make grants or loans of money, and to provide scholarships or other benefits, on such conditions as it thinks fit
- (g) to cooperate with the States and local governing bodies and with other persons and organisations concerned with the arts, and
- (h) to do anything incidental to any of its powers.

Arrangements for membership of the Council, boards and committees

The chair of the Council is appointed by the Governor-General. All other councillors are appointed by the Minister for the Arts and Sport. The Council consists of up to 14 part-time members, including the Chair and Deputy Chair, Chairs of each board, arts practitioners and community representatives. The CEO is a member of the Council *ex officio*. Members of the Council meet five to six times per year. Meetings are also held by teleconference as the need arises. The Act allows for the appointment of either a full-time or part-time Chair.

The various boards administer the Council's arts funding role and are the Council's main source of advice on the development of arts policy and grant programs.

Under Section 7 of the Australia Council Act, the Council has delegated to the relevant boards the power to make grants, within the framework of the Council's priorities, policies and budget allocations. The majority of board members are people who practise the arts or are otherwise associated with the arts. They bring to the boards first-hand knowledge of the particular requirements of the artform or the specific discipline, as well as a collective national overview. They participate in board meetings by providing expert advice on the assessment of grant applications and the development of artform policy. The expertise of board members is augmented by advisers drawn from the Register of Peers. The concept of peer group assessment within the boards is a principle of the Council.

Other procedures for public consultation are used at different times by the boards and the Council. For example:

- public meetings held in various centres, both

metropolitan and regional, generally in conjunction with Council and board meetings

- public meetings held by board managers and other senior members of staff, either independently or in association with other arts organisations
- discussion groups or seminars held with invited members of the public
- draft discussion papers circulated for comment
- 'open interviews' held when board staff are interstate and available to meet current and prospective clients
- regular meetings held between senior Australia Council officers and officers of state/territory arts authorities
- continuing liaison between government departments and authorities (Commonwealth, state/territory and local), as well as overseas agencies
- views from the public invited when submissions are being prepared on topics of particular interest to the arts community.

Categories of documents

The Council uses the following documents and manuals in making decisions and recommendations:

- Australia Council Act 1975
- Relevant Commonwealth legislation
- Australia Council Corporate Plan 2001–05
- Australia Council policies:
 - National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Arts policy
 - Arts in a Multicultural Australia policy
 - Regional Arts Development policy
 - Young People and the Arts policy
- Staff Operations Manual
- Manual for Members of the Australia Council
- Register of Peers Manual
- Support for the Arts Handbook 2002
- Support for the Arts Handbook 2003
- Grant application forms
- Research papers
- Terms and conditions of employment
- Minutes and agendas (Council and boards)
- Program reviews
- Program guidelines (Audience and Market Development).

Freedom of Information procedures

Applicants seeking access under the FOI Act to documents in the possession of the Council should forward a \$30 application fee and apply in writing to:

The Chief Executive Officer
Attention: FOI Coordinator
Australia Council
PO Box 788
Strawberry Hills NSW 2012

The FOI Coordinator is available at the Council offices, located at 372 Elizabeth Street, Surry Hills NSW, or by telephone on 02 9215 9000 or 1800 226 912 toll-free during normal business hours. The offices are wheelchair accessible.

In accordance with Section 54 of the FOI Act, an applicant may, within 30 days of receiving notification of a decision to refuse a request under the Act, apply to the CEO seeking an internal review of that decision. This application should be accompanied by a \$40 application fee as provided for in the FOI Act. An officer of the Council, who is at least one level above that of the initial decision-maker, will conduct the review.

Facilities for access

If it approves access, and after it has received payment of any charges that apply, the Council will provide copies of the documents concerned.

Alternatively, applicants may arrange to inspect documents at the Council offices, at the above address. For applicants living outside NSW, arrangements may be made to view the documents at the nearest regional office of the Australian Archives (in Melbourne, Brisbane, Townsville, Perth, Adelaide, Hobart, Darwin or Canberra).

The application fees and charges applying to FOI are as determined in Schedules to the FOI (Fees and Charges) Regulations. The CEO may remit the charges upon request. A decision not to remit the charges needs to be made within 30 days of a request being made.

Freedom of Information 2002–03

There was one request for information under the FOI Act during 2002–03.

Service Charter

The Australia Council is committed to providing high quality services to clients and stakeholders. The Australia Council's Client Service Charter explains how we deliver our services and is included in the *2002 Support for the Arts Handbook* and the *2003 Support for the Arts Handbook*, and is available to staff on the Council's intranet.

Ecologically sustainable development

The Australia Council makes a continual effort to minimise the impact of its activities on the environment.

An important Council strategy is to progress from paper management to electronic records management, which will in turn lead to better knowledge sharing and superior management of corporate records, faster access to information and cost savings in paper and storage.

In working towards this goal, during the year the Council has increased its use of the TRIM records management system by 25 per cent, resulting in an increased number of records being stored electronically.

The Council continued to purchase digital photocopiers, which are more energy efficient and use less paper due to the reduction in paper jams and inferior copies. The Council's energy consumption has reduced significantly owing to the purchase of these machines.

Further savings on paper have been achieved by emailing originals of documents direct to the print room, instead of making hard copies, and continuing to recycle paper across the Council offices.

Advertising

The Council uses print advertising to recruit new staff, announce new programs and initiatives, notify grant program closing dates, invite potential and existing clients to meet with Council staff, and call for tenders to undertake research.

Recruitment advertising expenditure for Corporate Affairs was \$15,896 in 2002–03, a saving of \$74,832 compared to 2001–02. This reflects changes to the recruitment and selection approach

introduced by the Council's new HR team this year. Advertising to invite clients to meet with staff and notify of closing dates (via English language and non-English language publications) totalled \$102,634 during the year, primarily initiated by PCR on behalf of all the artform boards. Advertising costs in AMD were \$12,863, mainly to call for tenders for research and review projects.