



Work Environment

IMAGE: From the performance of *Blue Moves* by The Fondue Set. The Fondue Set received a Skills and Arts Development grant from the Dance Board. Photo: Suzanne Brown

Work Environment

The Council is strongly committed to providing a workplace that supports its people in working towards its mission, vision, goals and policies.

Occupational Health and Safety

The Australia Council recognises that the workplace environment impacts employee performance and satisfaction. The Council takes seriously the requirement to provide a safe and hazard free workplace and to ensure that all employees are informed of and trained in their responsibilities under the relevant Occupational Health and Safety act and regulations.

In the past year there has been a 40 per cent reduction in the number of claims; 91 per cent reduction in time lost to work-related injuries; and a reduction in the need for specialist ergonomic assessments of individual work areas. These figures clearly reflect the impact that just one or two individuals can have on the OH&S performance of a small-sized organisation, even when it is considered a low risk environment.

The focus has been to encourage individual engagement with OH&S through a range of initiatives including individual computer based learning, improved profile and involvement of the OH&S Committee (particularly staff representatives), Health and Wellness presentations and displays.

All employees attend OH&S Awareness Training and complete self-auditing checklists at their workstations, which has enabled speedy progression to a workplace environment that is ergonomically sound.

Improved coordination of a basic First Aid service

to the organisation is underway, which will enable the Council to better meet its reporting obligations to Comcare of any OH&S-related incidents.

The Department of Immigration and Multicultural and Indigenous Affairs reports that the Australia Council met all of its applicable key performance indicators against *The Charter of Public Service in a Culturally Diverse Society* for the 2003 period.

Service Charter

The Australia Council is committed to providing high quality services to clients and stakeholders. The Council's Client Service Charter explains how we deliver our services—it is included in the 2003 and 2004 editions of the *Support for the Arts Handbook*, and is available for staff on the Council's intranet. The Council collects data on client complaints and its responses to them. We will review our Client Service Charter in the next reporting period.

Commonwealth Disability Strategy

The Commonwealth Disability Strategy (CDS) provides a framework to assist Commonwealth organisations to meet their obligations under the *Disability Discrimination Act 1992*. The Council is required to report on its performance in meeting the CDS under the designated core roles of policy adviser, purchaser, provider and employer.

Australia Council staff are committed to upholding organisational goals, one of which is to 'increase community engagement with the arts and to promote individual participation in them by increasing opportunities for all Australians to experience and participate in the arts and increasing access and reducing barriers to engagement with the arts'.

In the role of policy adviser, the Council seeks to support the 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 (DADAA) network. The Australia Council sees people with disabilities as potential stakeholders and is committed to making its programs accessible to people with disabilities. The input of DADAA and other representatives shapes Council policy and programs.

A national research project is currently being undertaken by DADAA with the Council's AMD division. The research will identify strategic ways of addressing barriers to access for audiences with disabilities and their carers by securing long-term relationships with a range of relevant stakeholders. AMD, in partnership with the NSW Ministry for the Arts, will also continue funding the audience development specialist based at Accessible Arts for a further three years. The focus will be on disseminating audience access and advocacy resources.

Public announcements are available in accessible formats for people with disabilities in a timely manner. All media announcements are made available on the Internet in both HTML and PDF. Information is also distributed in hard copy. The Australia Council's *Support for the Arts Handbook* is made available in online and audio and disk form as close as possible to the time of publication. There is a TTY facility available for the purpose of contacting the Australia Council about services and programs.

Application forms include a statistics-gathering page. This provides applicants with the opportunity to self-identify as having a physical or intellectual disability.

Research for the publication, *Don't Give Up Your Day Job*, included survey questions specifically related to artists with disabilities. The findings of the report are being analysed and will inform the Australia Council's future policy directions.

Customer feedback and complaints is a feature of The Australia Council Service Charter. We encourage feedback as part of our continued focus on quality improvement, and we review our compliance with the Charter and identify areas for improvement annually. This includes analysis of feedback and complaints received, as well as a process for input by clients, staff and stakeholders. The results of the client-service monitoring process are made publicly available.

The Council website was relaunched 2004; all the major pages comply with Priority 1 accessibility as required. Accessibility will be a focus in the ongoing maintenance and development of the website.

The Australia Council is also an employer, with responsibility to ensure that recruitment, employment and professional development policies and procedures comply with the *Disability Discrimination Act 1992*.

Accessible formats for potential job applicants are provided by mail, fax and online on request. Advertisements have also been included on the Internet.

Our human resources team has developed recruitment and selection guidelines that promote merit selection and non-discriminatory decisions. The HR team is also developing resources for induction, aiming to provide new employees with an understanding of the Council's functions and policies, which will include discrimination and diversity. Statistics relating to diversity are also collected and reported on at least annually.

The Council has internal and external grievance procedures, including review of actions under the *Public Service Act 1922* and appeals to the Australian Public Service Commission. Staff also have access to a professional counselling service through the Employee Assistance Program.

Freedom of Information

This statement provides required information under Section 8 of the *Freedom of Information Act 1982* (FOI Act).

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 a major source of advice to the Council on the development of arts policy and grant programs.

Under Section 7 of the 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.

Decisions by the Major Performing Arts Board are made in accordance with the Memorandum of Understanding between DCITA and the Australia Council. Decisions are made at formally constituted meetings.

In specific circumstances, duly delegated senior officers may commit expenditure in relation to decisions on activities and strategic initiatives made at formally-constituted Council or board meetings. Such actions are taken in compliance with the Council's Financial and Administrative Delegation, the Decisions-Making Framework for the Audience and Market Development and the Policy Communication Research Divisions, and the Arts Development Managers Decision Matrix.

Procedures for public consultation are used at different times by the boards, the divisions 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, Arts in a Multicultural Australia, Regional Arts Development, Young People and the Arts)
- Procedures and protocols for management of grants and projects
- Manual for Members of the Australia Council
- Register of Peers Protocols
- Support for the Arts Handbook 2003 and 2004
- Grant and initiative application forms
- Research papers
- Terms and conditions of employment
- Minutes and agendas (Council and boards)
- Program reviews
- Program guidelines (Audience and Market Development)
- Financial and Administrative Delegations
- Decision-making Framework for the Audience and Market Development and Policy Communication Research Divisions
- Australia Council Service Charter.

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, documents can viewed at the nearest regional office of the National Archives of Australia (Melbourne, Brisbane, Townsville, Perth, Adelaide, Hobart, Darwin or Canberra).

The application fees and charges for FOI requests are determined in Schedules to the FOI (Fees and Charges) Regulations. Charges may be remitted on request if their imposition would cause undue financial hardship or release of the documents is in the general public interest. A decision not to remit the charges must be made within 30 days of a request being made.

Freedom of Information 2003–04

There was one request for information under the FOI Act during 2003–04. All requested documents were released, with details identifying third parties removed. The request was finalised within the statutory time period.

Ecologically Sustainable Development

The Australia Council is currently developing an Ecologically Sustainable Development policy, which will encompass strategies for energy, paper and waste reduction. Each strategy will have a regular reporting mechanism to evaluate its performance in accordance with targets, and measure its impact on the environment and broader community.

In the review year, the Council:

- made progress in reducing its use of energy, largely through the introduction of more energy efficient hardware and equipment
- took into consideration 'green procurement principles' in major purchasing decisions
- implemented a plan to reduce the use of paper by making greater use of electronic communication
- adopted a life-cycle management approach in recycling its paper and cardboard, the reuse of paper-based office products, and the environmentally-friendly disposal of waste in accordance with local and state regulations. Recycled paper is shredded to create a paper-based pulp.

Energy consumption

Year	Energy (kWh)
2003-04	771,606
2002-03	824,773

Recycled paper

Year	Weight (kg)
2003-04	19,162
2002-03	17,152

Paper consumption (A4 80gsm copy paper)

Year	Reams
2003-04	5,700
2002-03	4,380

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.

The total cost of staff recruitment advertising for 2003-04 was \$18,941, an increase of \$3045 on last year's figure. This increase can be explained by the competitive employment market for specialist areas such as IT, HR, Finance and Communication, meaning multiple advertisements have been required to secure suitably qualified and experienced people.

Advertising to invite clients to meet with staff and notify closing dates (via English language and non-English language publications) totalled \$88,970, down from \$102,634 in 2002-03. Advertising costs in AMD were \$1636 for employment and promotion, down from \$12,863 last year.

The Council's ability to keep costs down is due to extensive use of online advertising, judicious use of print, and a decision not to use recruitment agencies.