

MAJOR PERFORMING ARTS (MPA) FRAMEWORK SUMMARY OF THE SECOND PHASE PUBLIC CONSULTATION OUTCOMES

APRIL 2019

DISCLAIMER

The material in this Consultation Paper is of a general nature and should not be regarded as legal advice or relied on for assistance in any particular circumstance or emergency situation. In any important matter, you should seek appropriate independent professional advice in relation to your own circumstances. The Commonwealth accepts no responsibility or liability for any damage, loss or expense incurred as a result of the reliance on information contained in this Consultation Paper.

This Consultation Paper has been prepared for consultation purposes only and does not indicate the Commonwealth's commitment to a particular course of action. Additionally, any third party views or recommendations included in this Consultation Paper do not reflect the views of the Commonwealth, or indicate its commitment to a particular course of action.

COPYRIGHT

© Commonwealth of Australia 2019



The material in this Consultation Paper is licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution–4.0 International licence, with the exception of:

- the Commonwealth Coat of Arms
- this Department's logo
- any third party material
- any material protected by a trademark, and
- any images and/or photographs.

More information on this CC BY licence is set out as follows:

- Creative Commons website
www.creativecommons.org
- Attribution 4.0 international (CC by 4.0)
www.creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0.

Enquiries about this licence and any use of this discussion paper can be sent to: copyright@communications.gov.au.

THIRD PARTY COPYRIGHT

The Department has made all reasonable efforts to clearly identify material where the copyright is owned by a third party. Permission may need to be obtained from third parties to re-use their material.

ATTRIBUTION

The CC BY licence is a standard form licence agreement that allows you to copy and redistribute the material in any medium or format, as well as remix, transform, and build upon the material, on the condition that you provide a link to the licence, you indicate if changes were made, and you attribute the material as follows:

Licensed from the Commonwealth of Australia under a Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International licence.

Enquiries about the use of any material in this publication can be sent to: copyright@communications.gov.au.

USING THE COMMONWEALTH COAT OF ARMS

Guidelines for using the Commonwealth Coat of Arms are available from the Department of Prime Minister and Cabinet website at www.pmc.gov.au/government/its-honour.

CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION	2
CONSULTATION OUTCOMES	4
WIDE RANGE OF VIEWPOINTS	6
GENERAL AGREEMENT	7

INTRODUCTION

THE MPA sector forms an important part of Australia's arts and culture landscape. The MPA sector comprises 29 leading performing arts companies in the fields of dance, theatre, circus, opera, orchestra and chamber music.

The MPA Framework is the mechanism through which the Australian and State Governments provide operational funding to, and outline their expectations of, the MPA sector. Delivery of harmonised funding through the MPA Framework is managed by the Australia Council (on behalf the Australian Government) with the State governments. Under the current Framework, agreement is required by all Arts and Culture Ministers for changes to the Framework, including funding levels and changes to the MPA cohort of companies.

In 1999, the Major Performing Arts Inquiry established criteria for how MPA companies should be funded. The current MPA Framework reflects the adjustments to these arrangements agreed to in 2011 by the Australian Government and State Governments.

In the 20 years since the creation of the original Framework many changes and new areas of growth have evolved with MPA companies and across the broader arts ecology in Australia. As a result, at the September 2017 Meeting of Cultural Ministers (MCM), Arts and Culture Ministers from all jurisdictions asked officials to identify opportunities to strengthen the Framework.

In the first phase of the public consultation in July and August 2018, officials undertook consultations with the MPA companies and research through an online survey managed by the Department of Communications and the Arts, to canvas views on the MPA Framework. Over the 25-day period of the survey, 8,026 responses were received from members the arts sector and the general public.

The initial consultation indicated broad support for changed arrangements and identified opportunities to create an enhanced Framework. Outcomes were summarised in a Consultation Paper which was released on 15 October and promoted via EDM, on social media and on a designated page of the Australia Council website. The Consultation Paper informed the next phase of the consultation process.

SECOND PHASE OF PUBLIC CONSULTATION

The second phase of the public consultation was led by the Australia Council on behalf of MCM over 6 weeks, closing on 26 November 2018. Eight public forums were held between 24 October and 14 November 2018, in Canberra, Brisbane, Melbourne, Hobart, Adelaide, Perth, Sydney and Darwin. In total, more than 360 people registered to attend a public forum with 30 people registering for a live captioned Webcast held on 22 November to provide regional access.

State-based meetings were also held in each capital city in October/November with resident MPA companies and state officials to discuss the Consultation Paper in more detail.

Input was received from individuals and organisations from the arts sector, peak bodies, MPA companies and the general public through the meetings and also via 370 written submissions.

The Consultation Paper formed the basis for the meeting discussions and written submissions. Opinions were solicited across the Paper's eight topic areas including:

1. A proposed architecture that would provide funding certainty without perpetuity;
2. Eligibility criteria, including definition of an MPA and the role of sector scans to determine eligibility;
3. A comprehensive assessment process based on the tiers of artistic leadership, financial and governance sustainability, and contribution to state/territory and national ecologies;
4. Accountability and clarity in expectations and outcomes;
5. Greater flexibility for the Australian Government and relevant State/Territory Government(s) to negotiate co-investment levels in individual companies;
6. Other potential features of an enhanced Framework including diversity, access and creative leadership;
7. Greater coordination and efficiency in touring funding;
8. A potential competitive fund which could support innovation and reward excellence; and
9. Venue-related interdependencies, and whether they should be accounted for under the Framework.

CONSULTATION OUTCOMES

As expected, opinions were profoundly varied with at extreme ends, views that there should be no changes to the Framework alongside views that it should be completely eliminated.

While much of the feedback followed the lines of questioning outlined in the Consultation Paper, it was clear that given many stakeholders' views of funding imbalance between the MPAs and the small to medium sector, a balanced perspective and discussion of the MPA Framework was at times difficult within the public realm.

However, the critical role of MPAs in the employment, training and development of artists and workers in the creative sector was widely acknowledged with a call for greater collaboration of MPAs with small to medium organisations.

Feedback in the form of detailed and considered contributions from both MPA and non-MPA respondents was substantial. The following points summarise the overarching views put forward by many respondents.

- An enhanced Framework should ensure **wider access** to the arts for all Australians, including those outside of metropolitan centres through performances, education and engagement programs and through affordable ticket prices and access programs.
- Greater **gender, diversity, and Indigenous representation** both on and off stage, as well as in key leadership roles, should be a requirement of MPA support by governments. This was a widely shared view.
- **New Australian works:** It was widely stated that governments should make the development and presentation of Australian, and especially new Australian work, a priority of an enhanced Framework.
- A formal periodic **assessment component** for MPAs was widely supported, with the qualifier that assessors must have knowledge and expertise working with large performing arts organisations.
- **Transparency and accountability:** Respondents supported a transparent funding mechanism and suggested that aggregate data on MPA performance should be made public, although it was acknowledged that commercial in confidence restrictions may apply in some areas of MPA reporting.
- **Stability** of funding should be balanced with **accountability**. Respondents argued for more **flexibility** to adjust funding levels based on performance against expectations, assessment and government priorities.
- **Contestability:** Respondents suggested that MPA funding should be based on assessment in order to encourage high performance and innovation and foster new growth within the performing arts.

CONSULTATION OUTCOMES

- **More companies** should be **eligible** for MPA support, both in number and composition. Varied points of view were provided on whether the Framework should include arts disciplines beyond the performing arts.
- There should be **clear guidelines for entry and exit of new companies** within an enhanced Framework, recognising the need to address strategic priorities in national and state/territory arts ecologies.
- A more coordinated approach to **touring of MPAs** is needed to increase and balance access to MPA work across Australia. A national touring scan was highly supported by all respondents with many commenting that support for MPA touring should be balanced by touring support for the small to medium sector.
- **Re-examination of financial thresholds:** The existing financial threshold of \$1.6 million of non-grant income in the current Framework was viewed as prohibitive (exclusionary) due to the specific sectors or business models of some companies who lead in their form of practice (ie youth theatre, pit service provision, education for example).
- Inclusion of **periodic sector-specific scans** was another area of the Consultation Paper which was supported, with support for an initial emphasis on national and regional touring.

WIDE RANGE OF VIEWPOINTS

As previously stated, views on elements in the Consultation Paper were not unanimous. While most supported some form of assessment and a transparent entry and exit strategy, others advised caution that major changes to the Framework could risk further de-stabilisation of the arts sector. However, most organisations, including MPAs, are supportive of an appropriate and more transparent assessment model.

A number of funding terms were suggested through the public consultation. Many in the small to medium sector supported a 4+4 funding commitment (and some suggested 6+6) whilst stating that the Framework, or at least heightened security of funding, should be extended to more organisations. Some felt that as part of annual reporting processes, MPAs should be penalised for not meeting KPIs.

Jurisdictions with MPAs emphasised the importance of those companies to their arts ecologies. It was also argued that flexibility to accommodate different state/territory economic realities, in order that all regions of Australia can develop their arts ecologies and infrastructures, should be built into a revised Framework.

Some felt that the Framework should stay 'squarely within the performing arts' while others suggested it be opened to other disciplines, such as the visual arts and literature, providing organisations meet the expectations of the Framework.

It was widely noted that only one Indigenous company is currently included in the Framework and that little diversity is reflected across the entire MPA cohort. Many respondents expressed the view that the cohort does not reflect the diversity and contemporary face of Australia.

GENERAL AGREEMENT

Responses that followed the broad lines of the Consultation Paper indicated support for an underlying Framework architecture that would balance funding certainty with accountability and transparency.

This is described in the Paper as funding security in principle for eight years subject to assessment (a four-year initial contract + four-year contract extension provided performance expectations are met). Many expressed views that funding should be assessed every four years like small-to-medium companies funded by the Australia Council, and that full assessment every eight years may not achieve flexibility to respond to changes in the ecology.

While transparent entry and exit protocols were called for within an enhanced Framework, many also felt that entry and exit should also be flexible based on a balance of artform delivery, including forms of performing arts currently under-represented in the Framework.

With few exceptions, the requirement for all jurisdiction agreement on entry and exit is viewed as a contributor to the static cohort of companies in the Framework over the past 20 years. Support was expressed for companies to negotiate KPIs with relevant state and territory agencies and the Australia Council and that invitation and KPI assessment should be based on a company's strategic intent, environmental context and on specific government priorities. It was suggested that governments should clearly articulate specific priorities they wish companies to plan for in advance of assessment. Support was given for annual public reporting in the aggregate of MPA outcomes along with KPI achievements.

Assessment based on state/territory and national priorities and on the three tiers of artistic quality, financial sustainability and contribution to the arts ecology was viewed as appropriate with again, the majority of respondents emphasising that diversity and the production of new Australian works should also be a requirement of MPAs.

It was widely acknowledged that MPA company performance is highly dependent on the state of, and relationship with, performing arts venues. However no common themes emerged on how this could be addressed within the Framework.

While support was expressed for an Enhancement Fund to support innovative new projects, respondents expressed the view that such support should be delivered through new funding, and that this should not be exclusive of the small to medium sector.



australiacouncil.gov.au