

David Clarkson on behalf of Theatre Network New South Wales (TNNSW).

NSW Government grant programs - Post-hearing responses - for the inquiry into the review of the integrity, efficacy and value for money of NSW Government grant programs.
Hearing 1 February 2021

1st question on Notice: Page 9

The CHAIR: We could have plenty more time on this. There is one question I would ask you to take on notice, which is about going forward. There is a recommendation at the end of the NAVA submission about recommending measures to lift the integrity for the grants schemes and it has six dot points.

TNNSW response to the above question:

While agreeing broadly with the six dot points from NAVA we have some important issues to raise with these points.

- Consistent methodology and full transparency in the decision making and grant approval process

This is very important, and it should be noted that since our submission Create NSW and TNNSW have already had several meetings in regards the transparency and overall efficacy of the grant application process.

- Rotational peer and expert assessment panels

Rotational peers are important, but it is best if the rotation occurs in a longer time frame (2-3 years plus?) rather than a shorter time frame (months). Time is need on Boards to build expertise and continuity across multiple application rounds. A mix of shorter term and longer term Board members may be ideal.

Expertise is vital as well, but in all reality, hardly anyone is an expert across all areas of an arts sector. TNNSW feels it is important the Board members are supported to engage with areas outside their own knowledge base i.e., go to see shows or exhibitions of artists they would not normally see as relates to their Board membership.

- Respect for artists in the application process

Of course, this goes without saying. But how is this to be carried out in action?

If Create NSW could:

- Keep to its own deadlines and give funding announcements to artists before Minister's press release.
- Be more transparent with funding mechanisms.
- Be consultative with the arts sector with appropriate consultation methodologies and Art Form Board structure.
- Have clear means of communication so artists can talk to staff.
- Give grant feedback to artists that is actionable, consistent and helpful.

- Provide clear and comparable results each round in a timely fashion

Yes absolutely. There are several ways this could be done including:

- Stating how many applied for funding, how many were successful, and the total funding given out per round.
- The total funding given to each art form and board.
- How many applications the Board recommended for funding.
- And of these, whom or what number the Minister agreed and or disagreed to fund and why this occurred.
- How much funding was given in total in each round to: the small to medium, the independent, the Majors and the LGA's?

- Provide actionable feedback to unsuccessful applicants

See above note in regards respect to artists. TNNSW appreciates with the volume of applications, feedback across all grants provides some challenges. But methodologies to provide more consistency on grant feedback could be developed.

- Ambitious investment in the NSW arts sector is crucial to sustaining artists' careers, developing the contemporary arts sector and advancing a healthy democracy.

TNNSW agrees with this point of course. But how is this to be delivered?

Would it be best if funding for the arts and culture was a cross portfolio directive? This would allow for due consideration of the impact the arts have on education, health, community well-being, communication, tourism, and innovation.

2nd question on Notice: Page 10

The Hon. NATALIE WARD: Would you recommend that those boards continue?

Mr CLARKSON: That is a hotspot.

The Hon. NATALIE WARD: Let's not let the perfect be the enemy of—

Mr CLARKSON: Yes. I think—

The CHAIR: You can always take questions on notice, Mr Clarkson.

Mr CLARKSON: I will answer just briefly. I think it is that mix of boards, Create NSW and the Minister. I think that can work but it needs a lot more fine-tuning. I will also take that on notice to get more feedback from my board.

TNNSW believes the Board structure of assessment is a good process.

However, there are some caveats as mentioned above:

- Continuity of Board membership with split rotation over multi-years.
- Expertise in their respective areas of practice with active engagement across their Board sector encouraged.
- Board recommendations to be listened to and where possible, fully acted on by Create NSW and the Minister.

In addition to the Art form Board system at Create NSW, a two tier engagement by Create NSW with the sector is seen as a positive step.

A consultancy model for co-design strategies for grant structure, transparency and round table industry discussion with arts Peak Bodies, (in addition to the multi Board model) would give Create NSW two strategic ways to engage with the sector, each acting as a partial check and compliment against the other.