

**INQUIRY INTO INTEGRITY, EFFICACY AND VALUE FOR
MONEY OF NSW GOVERNMENT GRANT PROGRAMS**

Name: Name suppressed

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Partially
Confidential

My submission concerns the process for determining arts funding, the unpredictable and tenuous nature of arts funding, the role of Minister's discretion in determining which projects are approved, and the integrity of grants schemes.

I am a musician of some 30 years. I have worked in a range of freelance and casual situations as a sole trader for the majority of that work. It has ranged from commercial, money making enterprises to creative, culturally enriching projects which either have no commercial viability (they lose more money than they make), or have the support of arts funding to exist. My work as a commercially employed musician has enabled me to engage in many original projects which I strongly believe in, to help grow a vibrant, local art form. The community of creative performers and composers I am privileged to engage with reflect the talent, excellence and unique nature of Australian art.

Small to medium arts companies are essential for the unifying and galvanisation of the many disparate musicians, composers and venues which keep this culture flourishing. The people who work in them do so, often out of a deep sense of commitment to sustaining this independent, original music scene. The work they do is vastly more than they get paid for, with many hours worked voluntarily, in order to bring success to projects, as well as work to secure funding. These organisations achieve so much on very modest budgets and bring exponential benefit to this chronically underrepresented community of musical creators.

The funding available for small to medium arts organisations is typically tenuous and insufficient to fully realise their potential. When that funding is suddenly withdrawn or reduced, the damage done to the creative music sector in NSW is particularly damaging. Creators of original, unique music in NSW survive and manage to contribute to the excellence and enrichment of Australian culture with very little money. More funding with increased surety needs to be made available to small to medium arts organisations, in order to stop our work from permanently disappearing and going underground. Compared to budgets for sport, we are still talking very small money.

The other aspect which needs addressing is the scope of Ministers' discretion in determining which projects are approved. Ministers should principally be responsible for policy. Their decisions should be informed by data and advice from experts within their portfolio. In the arts, the bodies which make decisions about the attribution of arts funding should be experts from within the arts field. This system isn't always going to be perfect, or the decisions completely impartial. But the fact remains, Ministers are politicians. The decisions they make about allocation of money have been shown all too often to be partisan and politically motivated, rather than based on expert advice about need and benefit. I believe Ministers' discretionary powers need to be kept at arm's length from the potential winners or losers of arts funding.