

The Guild offers

AWG Petition to the Australia Council

TO: Katherine Keele,

Australian Playwrights need your urgent assistance. The undersigned Playwrights, members of the Australian Writer's Guild, have learned that the Australia Council for the Arts has cut Key Organisational Funding for our Guild. In the past the Australia Council has supported our industrial, professional development and communications projects for playwrights through tri-annual funding. In 2010 we have in fact been refused the opportunity to even re-apply.

- The Guild is the only national membership organisation in Australia representing the interests of Playwrights and has a proud history of doing so for almost 50 years.
- The Guild is run for writers by writers, with a democratically elected board made up entirely of working practitioners.
- The Guild clearly and demonstrably meets all the Council's criteria for key organisational funding
- The Australia Council is the only source of funding for the Guild's playwrights to supplement our membership fees. Without a reliable source of organisational funding the core programs the Guild offers playwrights will not be possible.
- We note that a number of the organisations that have been invited to apply for Key Organisational Funding do not meet several of the essential criteria as set by the Australia Council. Several are not operating nationally, do not have a national constituency, do not have any track record of service delivery in the field for which they have been selected, and do not have the required funding from sources other than the Australia Council.
- Our organisation meets all those essential criteria and many of the additional/optional criteria, such as a national magazine with distribution many times in excess of the minimum criteria.
- Don't get us wrong – we support the work of these organisations and wish them future success. But Australian taxpayer funds should be distributed fairly and according to the Australia Council's own guidelines.
- We are very pleased to see that Playwriting Australia has been invited to apply for Key Organisational Funding. Some of us have been fortunate enough to benefit from their development support and advice and their exceptional efforts to shepherd the best of our plays to the Australian audience. But Playwriting Australia's mandate is very different from that of the Australian Writers' Guild. It does not purport to be able to substitute for the support, leadership and guidance that our Guild provides for all members – from emerging aspirants to the most experienced playwrights. That is to say it should be supported as well as, not in place of the AWG.

We are also concerned that, because – in a exchange in 2009 - our Guild questioned the propriety of some communications between Australia Council decision makers and interested parties, there is, at the very least, the appearance of a conflict of interest in the selection of those organisations eligible to apply for Key Organisational

Funding, and in particular in the Guild's absence from the list.

We know that funds for the arts are not limitless – but the Australia Council's actions have put one of the few targeted, member-responsive avenues of support for professional Playwrights at risk and we question the process, rationale and wisdom of this decision.

A viable, innovative Australian Theatre Industry depends on the development and support of Australia's playwrights. Please lend us your support. We request an urgent opportunity for a delegation to meet with you and for a review of the decision.

Thank you for your time and consideration:

Andrew Bovell
Verity Laughton
Suzie Miller
Errol O'Neill
Katherine Thomson
David Williamson

<mailto:industrial@awg.com.au>

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