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AID FOR THE ARTS

Statement by the Prime Minister, Mr. John Gorton

The Government's intention to aid and encourage the highest possible national standards in the Arts is reflected by the substantially increased provision in the Budget for grants and other support through the Australian Council for the Arts.

The allocation of \$2,850,000 for 1969-70 which represents an increase of \$1,183,651, or 71%, over expenditure last year, will provide for support in several new areas as well as for consolidation and extension of existing activities.

The Government will continue to support the maintenance of national touring companies which will bring the best drama, music, ballet and opera to all States and allow talented Australian artists to make a professional career in this country. Public interest in the ballet and opera is increasing and the Government will therefore support the establishment of a second theatre orchestra to enable extended seasons to be provided by these companies throughout the Commonwealth.

The Special Projects Fund established last year offered help to a wide variety of smaller companies based in the various States; it provided encouragement for playwrights, choreographers, composers and other creative workers. The Fund will be considerably extended in the coming year.

The Government regards the matter of professional training in the Arts as of great importance, and will continue to support the national training schools in ballet and drama. Subject to the findings of a survey which is at present being carried out, support will also be provided for training schemes for theatre administrators and technical personnel and, in this coming year, the first steps will be taken towards establishing a national opera school to provide a flow of trained opera singers for the National Company and for other purposes.

Many bodies such as the Australian Elizabethan Theatre Trust and the Arts Council of Australia (Federal) provide a valuable service in bringing a variety of theatre and artistic activities to Australians in metropolitan areas and in the country. The Government will continue to provide support for these bodies through the Australian Council, and in particular it is hopeful of seeing the work of the Arts Council in country areas considerably expanded.

The Government is looking at ways in which the Arts of the Australian Aboriginal might be fostered. It will provide support towards the establishment of a permanent professional group of Aboriginal dancers. This group will perform throughout the country, and will teach Aboriginal children the traditional culture of their people.

In previous years Federal Government assistance to music has principally been channelled through the Australian Broadcasting Commission, whose valuable work has brought a wide variety of music to Australians through orchestral concerts and broadcasts. Assistance to composers has been provided through the Government's Advisory Board in this field. This year funds will also be made available for musical activities through the Australian Council for the Arts which will advise the Government on appropriate additional areas for support.

In regard to film-making in Australia, the Government has accepted the recommendation of the Australian Council for the Arts that an Interim Council be established to investigate and report on the form and location of a National Film and Television Training School, and has provided \$100,000 for this purpose. The membership of the Interim Council, which will include a representative of the National Institute of Dramatic Art, will be announced shortly.

The Council for the Arts has also formulated plans to encourage the making and exhibiting of short experimental films and provision of \$200,000 has been made in the Budget so that assistance in this direction will begin during the present financial year.

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CANBERRA  
13 August 1969