

PRESS STATEMENT NO. 47

26 January 1973

NEW GOVERNMENT ARRANGEMENTS FOR THE ARTS

In my policy speech I mentioned my Government's commitment to the arts and our intention to legislate to establish the Australian Council for the Arts as an independent and strengthened agency to carry out our policies in this field.

The policies which my Government will pursue will have a two-fold objective - the pursuit of excellence and the spread of interest and participation. We will support the national institutions and programmes which produce, sustain and display the top level of professional achievement in the arts - the major theatre companies and orchestras, the National Gallery and collection, and smaller groups and particular projects of high quality. But our support for established organisations and art forms will be balanced by a strong programme of encouragement for experiment and development, and for numerous smaller groups and individuals whose activities bring enjoyment to many people.

We now propose to take our first step to improve the range and effectiveness of our support for the arts at Commonwealth level. We believe that public support is best provided through a body established independently of government. Vitality in the arts is frequently accompanied by innovation, by controversy and by challenge to established conventions of taste, beliefs and behaviour. Artists need protection from unnecessary restraints, and governments should be able to resist pressures from those who are disturbed by controversy and challenge.

There are at present a number of advisory bodies assisting the Federal Government with the administration of the arts. I refer to the Advisory Committee of the Commonwealth Literary Fund, the Commonwealth Art Advisory Board, the Committee for Commonwealth Assistance to Australian Composers, the Australian Council for the Arts and the Interim Council for a National Film and Television School. These bodies performed usefully in the past, and their members have provided dedicated and enthusiastic service, in many instances over long years. We are grateful to them for their contribution to the development of the arts in Australia and we hope that it will be possible to continue to take advantage from time to time of their experience in this field. However, we believe that the rapid expansion in the arts over the last few years and the likely indication of their future growth calls now for a more comprehensive and co-ordinated plan.

We are therefore proposing to create a new Australian Council for the Arts in which the functions of the existing advisory bodies will be resumed. The new Council will be established by an Act of Parliament which we hope will be introduced during the next session. The basis of the new Council will be seven boards dealing with different areas of the arts. The following boards will be appointed:

- Theatre, Visual and Plastic Arts, Music, Literature,
- Crafts, Film and Television, and Aboriginal Arts.

These boards will be the main source of policy initiatives in their field. They will have authority to deal with their own budget allocation and in consultation with the Australian Council for the Arts, to appoint specialist staff and committees to implement their policies. They will be the main point of communication with artists and people involved in their field. The chairman of each of these boards will be a member of the Australian Council for the Arts.

The new Council will have different functions and composition from the existing body. It will be responsible to the Government for the development of broad policies for the arts at Commonwealth level. It will advise the Government on new initiatives, on overall budgetary requirements and on matters referred to it by me or by other Ministers or bodies. It will act as a forum for joint discussion and co-ordinated planning between the various Boards and will develop programmes of common interest and participation, including a programme of international cultural exchanges. It will provide research, administrative and consultancy services to the boards, and will be enabled to be built up a body of expert staff to assist in the administration of support for the arts. It will establish and maintain relations with State and local governments and with other bodies providing support in this field.

The Council will have four categories of members. It will include people of broad general experience with an interest in the arts, the chairman of seven boards, the secretaries of those Government departments associated with its work, and a number of artists and people working in the arts. The terms of appointment will allow for regular replacement of members so that we may have over a period of time the benefit of advice and stimulus from a wide range of interested dedicated people.

The detailed operations of the new Council and its boards will take some time to work out. I am anxious however, that our support for the arts should not be delayed, and that planning for the next year should not be prejudiced. I am therefore proposing to appoint the new Council at once, to ask it to assume responsibility in the short term for the continuation of existing programmes and policies, and to prepare for me as soon as possible a plan for the new organisation which will enable us to proceed with legislative and other arrangements.

Until the Council has the opportunity to set up its own organisation it will be served by the staff of the present Council for the Arts which will collaborate with departmental and other officers who in the past have worked with the various Commonwealth agencies in the arts. During this period Dr. Jean Battersby will act as the Council's Executive Officer. During this interim period the present Council for the Arts will continue to be responsible for the Theatre Arts and other Commonwealth organisations will carry out their present functions in consultation with the newly appointed Council.

I am glad to announce that the following people have agreed to be foundation members of the new Council:

... /3

CATEGORY I

(General members)

Dr. H.C. Coombs (Chairman of the Council)
Professor R.I. Downing, Ritchie Research
Professor of Economics in the
University of Melbourne

Mr. P.J. Brusey, Q.C.

Mrs. Betty Burstall

Mr. H.R. (Kim) Bonython

Mr. J.L. Menadue, General Manager of Mirror-Australian-
Telegraph Publications

Mr. H. Bluck, State Secretary of the Musicians Union
in W.A.

CATEGORY II

(Chairman of the boards)

Mr. Dick Roughsey (Chairman of the Aboriginal Arts Board)

Mrs. Maria Gazzard (Chairman of the Crafts Board)

Professor C. Blainey, Professor of Economic History in
the University of Melbourne and
present Chairman of the
Commonwealth Literary Fund
Advisory Board (Chairman of the
Literature Board)

Mr. Donald Banks, composer (Chairman of the Music Board)

Mr. H.J. Baily, Director of the Art Gallery of S.A.
(Chairman of the Visual and
Plastic Arts Board)

Mr. Peter Hall, current architect of the Sydney Opera
House (Chairman of the Theatre
Board)

Mr. Phillip Adams, journalist and advertising
executive (Chairman of the Film
and Television Board)

CATEGORY III

(Artists and performers)

Mr. David Williamson, playwright

Mrs. Judith Wright-McKinney, poet

Mr. Clifton Fugh, artist

Mr. Tim Johnson, artist

Miss Caroline Jones, television journalist

Mr. Don Burrows, jazz musician

CATEGORY IV

(Representatives of Commonwealth Departments and the
A.B.C.)

Sir John Bunting, Secretary of the Department of the
Prime Minister and Cabinet

Sir Keith Waller, Secretary of the Department of
Foreign Affairs

Mr. J.H. Oswin, Secretary of the Department of the Media

Mr. T.S. Duckmanton, General Manager of the Australian
Broadcasting Commission

I am sure that artists and people interested in the progress of the arts will wish the new Council well and I trust that they will be willing as need arises to cooperate in its important work.

CANBERRA A.C.T.