Appendix G. Summary of major inquiries into and reviews of Australian arts and cultural sectors


The Bonython report into the crafts in Australia was the first inquiry into this sector. It was announced by Coalition Prime Minister William McMahon in 1971 and continued under the Labor prime ministership of Gough Whitlam. The committee presented its report in 1975. During this period, craft practice in Australia had undergone significant growth and recognition including the establishment of a Crafts Board within the Australia Council for the Arts in 1973.

The aim of the enquiry was to:

- enquire into the present general state of the crafts in Australia as a professional activity;
- report on the organisation, distribution and development of the crafts in Australia; and
- report and make recommendations to achieve the above objectives.

As there was little information about craft activity, workers, training or marketing, the committee undertook extensive surveying, interviews and fieldwork to establish some baseline information about the contours of the sector. This work remains the most comprehensive study of crafts in Australia to date.

The key issue identified by the committee was:

> That there is almost no understanding on the part of the community as to what the crafts are or what their role should be. They have been regarded principally as hobbies in Australia rather than as professional pursuits with a significant part to play in the economy.

As a result, the report continued, there was a lack of training pathways; accreditation processes; disparagement by the artistic community; lack of supplies of quality materials; parsimonious attitudes by the buying public; and lack of interest by the design-related industries. In Aboriginal communities — even though crafts are recognised as part and parcel of indigenous culture — the committee observed that Aboriginal people ‘have become alienated from their crafts’ and require government assistance to redress this situation.

Accordingly, the committee made a comprehensive suite of recommendations having the specific object assisting the crafts ‘to develop effectively in this
country’ by improving the provision of relevant services and conditions while removing impediments to growth and sustainability concerning. These embraced a wide range of matters including: training; professional standards; publicity; sales tax and customs duties; supplies; selling and exhibiting; craft centres; country needs; industry and industrial design; craft organisations; aboriginal crafts; migrant craft; and community and leisure.

Although this broad package was not implemented in full, it has provided the framework within which the craft sector in Australia has been transformed as acknowledged in the Myer report into the Visual Arts and Crafts sector in 2002.


The IAC inquiry into ‘whether assistance should be accorded the performing arts in Australia and if so what should be the nature and extent of such assistance’ was commissioned by Labor Prime Minister Gough Whitlam in October 1974 and published in December 1976, by which time the Coalition government of Malcolm Fraser was in power. Reflecting on the saga that it became, Justin Macdonnell (1992: 142-3) argued that it is ‘doubtful if any government investigation has ever been so misrepresented and misunderstood, or vilified’. Whitlam later commented that he was glad it landed on Fraser’s desk and not his.

Although it has retrospectively been identified as part of Fraser’s ‘hard line’ economic policy, in fact the enquiry occurred because of controversy, fanned during Whitlam’s tenure, about the direction of arts policy and the increasing ‘arrogance’ of the Australia Council. Ironically, the Australia Council and commercial performing arts lobbyists, who hoped that the IAC would be able to increase subsidy to the sector, unintentionally initiated the enquiry. It was some time before they realised that the IAC agenda was very different from their own, or Whitlam’s, or Fraser’s, for that matter.

The enquiry has been commonly represented as recommending the withdrawal of subsidy to the elite performing arts and therefore as a collective ‘philistine’, unappreciative of Australian culture. In fact, the IAC had what might now be seen as a progressive stance on arts and culture, beginning from the question of what constituted the arts and culture and what public benefit flowed to the community. Explicitly, it adopted a broad anthropological definition of culture and rejected the intrinsic value and special pleading of the elite sector. Witnesses, while passionate about the arts, failed to convince the Commission of the community benefits of the arts or the ways in which elite culture contributed to the Australian community’s ‘way of life’. It took a broad-brush definition of the performing arts as ‘the entire range and … not [just] to the narrow but highly
subsidised group of arts which many witnesses invested with a intangible and undefined ‘cultural’ value’.

The Commission dissected the assumption that the ‘flagship philosophy’ should be subsidised in order to produce ‘excellence’ that would somehow, intangibly, enrich the community at large and the related belief that this was ‘settled national policy’. Rather, this was a discriminatory policy that disregarded community values and the ordinary culture of citizens. To redress this, the Commission argued that arts and cultural policy should be based on the three criteria of innovation, disseminating and education, to which end, funding to the elite companies should be maintained for three years then phased-out over five. Funding should be re-directed towards the new objectives that met community expectations. Where existing [elite] companies failed to replace support by other means and show relevance, they might face the prospect of closure. The report concluded that:

It has not, however, been able to discern any rational reason why the community as a whole should not adopt a partisan attitude toward distributing assistance from which it could not reasonably expect to benefit.

When the draft report was released, it stunned everyone: Whitlam, Fraser and the arts community included. Prime Minister Fraser distanced himself from it, rejecting the ‘harsh economic criteria’ and ‘user-pays principle’ it had employed and confirming a commitment to continue to support ‘individual art [and] also the major performing arts companies in Australia — the opera, ballet, and drama’. Despite widespread criticism of the report and a new round of submissions and responses, the final report was largely unchanged. The government quickly rejected its findings to phase out ‘existing patterns of assistance to the performing arts’. Rather, it enunciated its policy as follows:

The Government considers that the promotion of excellence in the arts is of primary importance and continuation of assistance to the presently subsidised companies is seen as being consistent with this objective.

While the IAC report was officially dead, its musings on the elitism of the performing arts and its community of interest — especially the elitist fortress mentality of the Australia Council — slowly percolated through subsequent debates about the arts and cultural sector. It is fair to conclude that the logic of the report slowly transformed the terms in which arts and culture was discussed and eventually the basic premises on which policy strategies were couched.

This report came after a period of energetic development of the arts and cultural sector and expansion of policies designed to facilitate cultural activity. It was also responding to the furore that ensued on the release of the Industries Assistance Commission report of a decade before that had adopted a stringent rational economic framework of analysis.

The McLeay report was an attempt to define (or redefine) the role of the Commonwealth ‘in assisting the arts’. The committee took a broad view of the arts as one component of culture and saw the role of government as one of maximising the benefits of the arts to society as a whole. Specifically, it rejected ‘the view that Commonwealth assistance is a right of the arts because of their merits’ and that ‘arts assistance is a specialised form of welfare for artists’.

The Committee accepted that ‘the arts are not homogeneous’ and that different artforms provide different public benefits, thus requiring different mechanisms of support. In particular, the Committee distinguished between ‘heritage art’ (survivors of past artistic activity), ‘innovatory art’ (new methods of expression or interpretation of culture) and ‘new art’ (the mass of contemporary art work which falls into the mainstream of cultural activity).

Accordingly, the Committee recommended that heritage and innovatory art required mechanisms ‘to sustain adequate levels of conservation of art’ while new art should be prioritised because of its ‘public benefits’. A key phrase of the report was: ‘Access and diversity should thus be principal objectives of assistance to new art’.

The key objective:

Of government arts assistance [was] increasing cultural democracy. We define this not as wider access to the so-called high arts, but rather as access by the community to a diversity of cultural experiences from which individuals may choose for themselves the cultural activities of most benefit to themselves at any time.

To this end, the report recommended that:

- the Australia Council confine its activities to the subsidised arts in the form of the administration of grants while the broader arts and cultural agenda be facilitated by a federal department, namely the Department of Arts, Heritage and Environment;
• in order to retain the professionalism of the major performing arts companies, they were centralised under the Australia Council to administer grants and institute accountability processes;
• an overhaul of tax concessions that were deemed ‘relatively unaccountable’, ‘inequitable, inefficiently targeted and open ended’ was proposed by instituting a system of Ministerial approval;
• support for popular contemporary music was recommended; and
• addressing alternative models of support, the Committee recommended establishing the International Cultural Corporation of Australia, Artbank, and the Public Lending Right Scheme.

The McLeay report set the scene for arts and cultural policy for the next decade.


In 1992, the Commonwealth Government appointed a Cultural Policy Advisory Panel of eminent Australians from diverse walks of life to advise on the formulation of a Commonwealth cultural policy. The panel wrote a preamble based on the belief that ‘democracy is the key to cultural value’ in a world undergoing major changes in technologies, values and ideologies shaping the expansion of ‘homogenised international mass culture’. Australian culture was defined as the sum of mode of life, ethics, institutions, manners and routines that has ‘flourished’ into ‘an exotic hybrid’. While this should be encouraged, cultural policy makers faced a dilemma between reconciling egalitarianism with artistic excellence.

The panel concluded that culture should be placed higher among the government’s policy priorities, both as a separate portfolio and across all areas of government. It also recommended that a Charter of Cultural Rights be adopted to guarantee all Australians: the right to an education that encourages creativity; the right to access cultural heritage; the right to new artistic works; and the right to community participation in cultural life.

The Creative Nation document that followed this preamble was premised on the assertion that culture defines national identity and preserves Australian heritage. As the ‘first national cultural policy’, Creative Nation aimed to link everyday life with cultural enrichment and the pursuit of cultural excellence.

It recognised the complex, multicultural and urban society that Australia had become as well as acknowledging the contribution of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander culture to national identity. Several aims underpinned its recommendations:

• to shore up our cultural heritage in national institutions;
• to adapt new technologies for cultural preservation and dissemination;
• to create new avenues for artistic and intellectual growth and expression;
and
• to support artists and writers.

The policy was also grounded in the belief that ‘this cultural policy was also an economic one. Culture creates wealth.’

*Creative Nation* canvassed a wide range of measures to enhance the role of culture in Australian life. This included expanding the role of the Commonwealth in managing culture through: increased federal funding; enhanced roles for DCITA and the Australia Council; establishing a Major Organisations Board within the Australia Council to support elite performing arts organisations; and establishing new cultural support programs and incentives to develop private sector cultural sponsorship.

As well as enhancing the role of cultural agencies and organisations, *Creative Nation* also proposed a range of strategies to address issues in the film and media sector; provide development funding for multi-media centres; introduce a range of measures to protect creative copyright; expand cultural heritage provisions; offer incentives for cultural industry development; redress cultural education provision; introduce incentives for cultural investment and export; and expand cultural tourism in Australia.

Although only some of the recommendations were introduced before the Keating Labor Government lost office in 1996, *Creative Nation* set the terms of arts and cultural policy in the early years of the Howard coalition government and influenced international models for cultural policy, most notably, in the United Kingdom.

**Appendix G.5. Review of the Australian Film Industry (David Gonski, chair) 1997. Canberra: DCITA.**

The Gonski review of the Australian film industry aimed at addressing structural problems in the industry, in particular, the extent to which it is marginalised through competition with the mainstream Hollywood film industry, its reliance on government funding to get film projects off the ground and the perceived need to make films that reflect and are relevant to Australian culture.

Australia is home to one of the world’s oldest film industries, dating from the 1890s and boasting one of the largest cinema-going audiences in the world (in per capita terms). Despite this, the Australian film industry had been in abeyance until the 1970s when Australian governments initiated various funding schemes to encourage film production, especially for films that promoted national culture. Government initiated film organisations have included state bodies (e.g. Film Victoria, New South Wales Film and Television Office, Pacific Film and Television
Commission, ScreenWest and the South Australia Film Corporation) as well as a number of federal bodies: the Australian Film Commission (AFC) (1975–present), Australian Film Institute (AFI) (1958–present), the Australian Film Finance Corporation (FFC) (1988–present), Film Australia, and the National Film and Sound Archive (1984–present).

During the 1980s, the federal government introduced the 10BA Scheme, which was a generous tax concession incentive, designed to stimulate film investment in film production. Despite a flurry of films, the scheme did not translate into better box office receipts or quality films and, despite various adjustments to the scheme, it was eventually replaced by investment mechanisms administered by the FCC.

Due to continued debate about the viability of the industry, David Gonski was commissioned to inquire into the Australian film industry and delivered his report in 1997. He calculated that the industry contributed $1.2 billion annually to the Australian economy and employed over 20,000 people. Gonski’s approach was to downplay the ‘screen culture’ approach of film as a building block of national identity and examine its business basis and export potential. The release of the report produced mixed reactions. Despite concern about cutting government funding, existing arrangements persisted. A new initiative flowing from the Gonski report involved the establishment of a framework for the formation of Film Licensed Investment Companies (FLICs), a measure that conferred special status on a few film production companies to invest in innovative projects, drawing on government and private funding.

These arrangements were strengthened in 2001 when then Minister for Communications, Information Technology and the Arts announced new measures for supporting the film industry. These included:

- a new production incentive in the form of a refundable tax offset;
- increased funding for the FCC;
- new funding for SBS Independent to commission multicultural drama and documentaries;
- extra funding for Film Australia to fund its community service obligations in the form of films in the national interest;
- increased funding for digital and broadband services, development and education; and
- incentives to attract off-shore productions in Australia.

These changes were perceived by the critics within the film industry as shoring up the larger and more commercial players while ignoring the needs of independent and experimental producers.

The Nugent inquiry into 31 major performing arts organisations arose out of a perceived crisis in the sector due to the adverse impacts of globalisation, technological change and demographic shifts on their viability: in short, costs were spiralling while revenue was declining. The inquiry conducted a comprehensive dissection of the sector employing a business model as well as a review of the organisations’ performance in terms of training, administration and repertoire.

The report argued that the major performing arts companies made ‘an enormous artistic and financial contribution to Australian life’ and that the implementation of these recommendations would ‘stabilise’ and ‘reposition’ the sector and thereby ‘secure [its] artistic vitality, accessibility and financial viability’.

The underlying principles of the report were that:

- Australia should have a vibrant major performing arts sector that enriches Australian life and builds its image as an innovative and sophisticated nation; that Australia should cost-effectively deliver broad access to the major performing arts — recognising that the arts are for everyone; an that Australia should have a financially viable major performing arts sector that supports artistic vibrancy.

Equally, however, the report endorsed the view that government support should be ‘transparent and should be based on an understanding of the responsibilities of all parties’.

The report’s 95 recommendations were accepted by government and an extra $70 million was injected into the sector by federal and state governments, administered by DCITA and the MPAB of the Australia Council. The recommendations were designed to create a cohesive structure for the industry and included:

- Classifying companies into Global, Australian Flagship, Niche and Regional Flagship depending on the strategic role played by each.
- Introducing a five step funding model that reflects the cost of each artform, each company’s strategic role and the commitment to geographic access.
- Ensuring a commitment to invest in new works, new productions and improved quality of performance to increase box office receipts and build a differentiated image of Australia.
- Strengthening private sector support.
- Engaging in collaborations, cooperation and co-productions between companies within artforms.
- Exploring a ‘community of musicians’ concept between orchestras.
- Strengthening marketing and development capacity.
- Introducing rolling triennial funding.
- Improving accountability and reporting practices.
- Adopting a reserves policy.
- Changing the financial dynamics of companies in each artform.

Despite the introduction of the majority of these changes, the overall wellbeing of the major performing arts companies has not markedly improved, as an Australia Council review by the Major Performing Arts Board concluded in 2004. Because of the perceived bias towards protecting the major artform companies, other sectors lobbied for similar reviews and funding increases. The Nugent Report became the first of the so-called ‘Review Cycle’ into arts sectors with inquiries into the small-to-medium performing arts sector, visual arts and crafts, symphony orchestras, new media and dance to follow.


In 1998, the Australia Council commissioned a consultancy to establish the extent to which the general public valued ‘the arts’. This was part of a broader strategy to map the characteristics of the Australian cultural environment in which they hoped the arts would flourish in the future. Saatchi and Saatchi (through Sandra Yates and Paul Costantoura) conducted the research.

The research found that some sectors of the public hold misconceptions about what constitutes ‘the arts’ as well as misconceptions within parts of the arts sector about who constitutes the Australian public. The report concludes that both misconceptions need to be addressed if art and culture are to become more important to Australian life.

The main findings can be summarised as follows:

- While the arts have become part of Australian society, the majority enjoy art and culture associated with everyday life as a form of entertainment and a forum for social opportunities with friends and family.
- Many Australians do not feel welcome to enjoy the arts due to a perceived sense of exclusion, a lack of access, lack of relevant information and education about the arts, and negative connotations about the social environment of the arts.
- There is a relatively high level of disinclination towards or disengagement from the arts arising from a belief that they are irrelevant to people’s lives.
- The arts sector does not communicate well with the general public outside specific markets.
- Some within the arts sector have inaccurate perceptions of the ‘average Australian’.
• There is a lack of organisational skills, communication mechanisms, commercial and community foci, and marketing-cum-branding expertise within the arts sector.
• The future of the arts will require securing new supporters and markets from those Australians who currently largely ignore the arts.
• Australians are split into thirds in estimating the personal and national value of the arts: a third placing a high value on the arts; a third a low or fairly low value; and the rest in-between.
• Those who value the arts highly are likely to be: female, with university education, living capital city centres, without children, older and in households with high incomes.
• Those who place a low value on the arts find them irrelevant to their lives and feel excluded from them, finding them elitist and inaccessible.
• Familiarity with and knowledge of the arts from childhood is positively related to positive attitudes and likelihood of artistic participation.
• Few could name more than three components of ‘the arts’ spontaneously (the big ‘A’ arts) and wanted to include a broader array of little ‘a’ arts (e.g. fashion design, graphic design, popular music, television shows, and children’s art and drama).
• Australians possess a much broader idea of creativity than is encompassed by ‘the arts’.


As a result of the funding changes that followed from the *Nugent Report* on the major performing arts sector, the small to medium performing arts sector (SMPA) lobbied for similar consideration and attention to their circumstances. In 2000, the Cultural Ministers Council commissioned ‘an examination of the factors influencing the artistic and financial position of small to medium sized performing arts organisations’.

The SMPA report complimented the sector on its ‘great diversity, a focus on new creative endeavour, a slim administrative structure, a large volunteer workforce and a commitment to artistic production’. However, it noted that the financial situation of the sub-sectors was ‘finely balanced’ or ‘in decline’, ‘raising questions about the sustainability of organisations in [the music and dance] sectors in both the short and long term’.

The report noted that although the SMPA sector was hoping for increased government funding to alleviate its precarious situation, the working party suggested, ‘there are other solutions which also need to be considered’. The included:
• clarification of governments’ expectations of the SMPA sector either towards greater self-sustainability or excellence in artistic development (by either supporting fewer organisations or targeted increases to specific organisations);
• strengthening the administrative capacity of the SMPA sector to provide a more stable business and operating environment (by training, board membership, resource networking across the sector, audience development, and fundraising);
• improved inter-governmental communications and co-funding arrangements; and
• enhancing the role of the SMPA sector in promoting Australia’s culture in the international arena by facilitating international tours.

The report was published in 2002 but, unlike the Nugent Report, no new financial arrangements resulted. This led to widespread resentment within the SMPA sector who believed that, although it was the ‘research and development’ incubator for experimentation and innovation in Australian performing arts, the SMPA sector was languishing while the less efficient, larger and more conservative major organisations were receiving generous recurrent funding and enjoyed favourable financial arrangements with increased subsidy. Little has come from the SMPA report although it initiated the collection of data on the characteristics of the sector.


This report, another in the Review Cycle, was commissioned in 2001 by then Minister for the Arts and the Centenary of Federation, Peter McGauran, and chaired by Rupert Myer. It explored opportunities to ‘to identify key issues impacting on the future sustainability, development and promotion’ of the visual arts and crafts sector recognising that:

Visual arts and crafts are major contributors to Australian culture and the Australian economy, yet at the same time, visual artists and crafts people are amongst the lowest income earners in Australia. This inquiry … will give us a comprehensive picture of the sector and what can be done by all tiers of government to ensure its continued development in the future.

The report concluded that the sector required an injection of funding:

… for individual artists and their supporting infrastructure from corporate sponsorship and private philanthropy. This is not intended as a substitute for government support but as a critical supplement.

It was a broad ranging inquiry into the estimated 20,000 visual artists and craft practitioners as well as curators, arts writers, arts organisations and galleries.
Despite the enthusiasm and dynamism of the sector, the inquiry found that financial foundations were generally vulnerable even though the sector was estimated to contribute approximately $160 million to GDP. There was concern in the sector that its contribution was not ‘sufficiently valued’ and its achievements not ‘adequately acknowledged’. A comprehensive analysis of the sector was compiled.

A wide range of recommendations were made, including:

- increased government funding across all tiers;
- implementation of a resale royalty scheme;
- revision of taxation liabilities of artists;
- revision of copyright provisions;
- protection of indigenous copyright and intellectual property rights;
- strengthen the role of arts and crafts organisations to provide supportive environment for artists;
- extend schemes for touring, exhibitions and audience development; and
- implement schemes to encourage sponsorship and philanthropy (such as tax incentives and a cultural gifts program).

In all, an extra $29 million was injected into the sector. While the spirit of the report was accepted and some recommendations adopted, more recent studies of artists’ incomes and infrastructural support suggest that major reform of this sector has not occurred.


The National Museum of Australia opened in 2001 and immediately attracted controversy on a number of fronts including: the postmodernist choice of architecture (in the shape of a rainbow serpent); the small size of the building; the choice of exhibition themes and their interpretation; the use of facsimile objects for display; the high tech presentation of exhibits; and the perceived privileging of indigenous culture over that of European settler culture.

The government’s stated intention in establishing the museum was:

> That the museum would be an institution, combining the best contemporary techniques with new media technologies, in order to offer a range of experiences of wide appeal. There were to be permanent, changing and travelling exhibitions and blockbusters, and it was intended that audiences beyond Canberra would be reached using information and communication technologies.
The Museum was charged with celebrating ‘our journey as a nation’ in social history spaces. Prime Minister, John Howard, took particular interest in the NMA and its Council was stacked with members sympathetic to the government’s conservative outlook. Controversy continued, however, and in 2003, a review was announced into the exhibitions and public programs of the Museum. Specifically, the review, chaired by the widely respected sociologist, John Carroll, was to consider:

- whether the Museum had complied with its prescribed role and functions;
- whether the government’s vision had been realised; and
- offer recommendations on future priorities.

In reality, the review was a politically-driven inquisition into the policy and operations of the Museum. One of the issues underpinning the review was the divide between those who advocated a chronologically, classificatory and authoritative view of Australian history and society versus those who advocated a ‘pluralist’ presentation of ‘imagined communities’, multiple histories and diverse points of view. A number of related themes emerged during the review, such as:

- What is the role of a national museum?
- How do contemporary museums differ from traditional ones?
- How can museums relate to different kinds of visitors (one-off, frequent, children, Australians, international visitors, etc.)? and
- How should objects be displayed and explained?

After a comprehensive review of the activities of the NMA and a vigorous public submission process, the committee concluded that the Museum would need to make some changes if it was to fulfil its potential as an authoritative cultural institution. It found that the NMA had met its founding criteria ‘to varying degrees’ however, the committee concluded that its ‘principal weakness is its story-telling’:

The NMA is short on compelling narratives, engagingly presented dramatic realisations of important events and themes in the Australian story. And there are too few focal objects, radiant and numerous enough to generate memorable vignettes, or to be drawn out into fundamental moments … Without engagement, there is little likelihood of inspiration, reflection or education.

Singled out for criticism was the *Horizons Gallery* that addressed post-European parts of the Australian story but failed to present ‘exemplary individual, group and institutional achievements’ central to understanding ‘the fundamental themes and narratives of Australia’. The review also found ‘difficulties with signage, exhibit lighting and acoustics — ones which are pervasive and serious’. Lack
of coordination between research, collection policy and collaboration was also noted. The review identified a strengthening of the Museum’s story-telling capacity and the use of focal objects as the core of a desired long-term strategy while making a number of short-term recommendations including:

- reconsidering the themes and narratives for the Horizons and Nation galleries;
- addressing curatorial issues and exhibition modes;
- redeveloping the introductory film, Circa to provide a ‘compelling introduction to the Museum, and a clear orientation to the permanent exhibitions’; and
- conducting better research, collaborative and audience development activities.


The last of the so-called ‘Review Cycle’ inquiries examined the state of symphony and pit orchestras, arguably the least viable of the performing arts sector. Commissioned by then Minister for the Arts and Sport, Rod Kemp, in 2004, it was mooted during the MPAI to address ‘clear financial pressures and other challenges’ facing Australian orchestras.

Chaired by James Strong, the committee examined a range of operational, marketplace, financial and governance issues facing Australian orchestras focusing on artistic vibrancy, cost effective access, financial viability and financial transparency. 20 recommendations were made including:

- divesting the six symphony orchestras from the ABC and transform them into public companies limited by guarantee;
- changing the employment and superannuation provisions of orchestra employees;
- improving the expertise of boards and revising appointment practices;
- developing a new realistic funding model;
- removing the efficiency dividend;
- cutting the number of players in Queensland orchestras (from 85 to 74), Adelaide Symphony Orchestra (from 75 to 56) and Tasmania Symphony Orchestra (from 47 to 38); and
- inquiring into the provision of orchestral services for Opera Australia and the Australian Ballet.

The report triggered considerable heated public debate, attracting more attention than any of the other reviews. Especially contentious was the recommendation to reduce the size of certain orchestras, a change that was pilloried by cartoonists.
and commentators. This recommendation was quietly dropped. Generally, however, the Strong recommendations were accepted resulting in:

- an extra $25.4 million over four years;
- extra funding to retain orchestra sizes in Queensland, South Australia and Tasmania;
- funding to transform orchestras into public companies;
- funding for occupational health and safety changes;
- funding to offset the efficiency dividend; and
- extra funding for providing orchestral services to Opera Australia and the Australian Ballet.

Subsequent studies of the state of Australia symphony orchestras suggest that these changes have failed to achieve stability and financial well-being.


In August 2006, the Senate established a Committee for inquiry into Australia’s Indigenous visual arts and craft sector, with particular reference to:

- the current size and scale of Australia’s Indigenous visual arts and craft sector;
- the economic, social and cultural benefits of the sector;
- the overall financial, cultural and artistic sustainability of the sector;
- the current and likely future priority infrastructure needs of the sector;
- opportunities for strategies and mechanisms that the sector could adopt to improve its practices, capacity and sustainability, including to deal with unscrupulous or unethical conduct;
- opportunities for existing government support programs for Indigenous visual arts and crafts to be more effectively targeted to improve the sector’s capacity and future sustainability; and
- future opportunities for further growth of Australia’s Indigenous visual arts and craft sector, including through further developing international markets.

The report, published in June 2007, made 29 key recommendations. Among its key recommendations were:

- That the Commonwealth establish a new infrastructure fund to assist Indigenous visual arts and craft; that this fund complement existing NACIS program funding; that this infrastructure fund be for a sum of the order of $25 million, made available over a period of five years; and that the fund be administered by DCITA.
• That the Commonwealth further expand funding under the existing NACIS scheme and consider revising its guidelines to confine its use to non-infrastructure projects.

• That, in light of the special circumstances facing Indigenous artists in the Alice Springs area, a proposal be developed, including a funding bid, for an art centre in Alice Springs that will cater for artists visiting the town from surrounding settlements.

• That, as a matter of priority, the ACCC be funded to increase its scrutiny of the Indigenous art industry, including conducting educational programs for consumers as well as investigation activities, with a goal of increasing successful prosecutions of illegal practices in the industry.

• That the Indigenous Art Commercial Code of Conduct be completed as soon as possible.

• That, once completed, all Commonwealth, state and territory agencies apply the Indigenous Art Commercial Code of Conduct where appropriate, including when purchasing Indigenous art.

• That, once completed, all stakeholders in the industry examine, disseminate and adopt where relevant the Indigenous Art Commercial Code of Conduct.

• That the industry be given the opportunity to self regulate. If after two years persistent problems remain, consideration should be given to moving to a prescribed code of conduct under the Trade Practices Act.

• That as a matter of priority the government introduce revised legislation on Indigenous communal moral rights.

• That the Commonwealth support increased efforts to showcase Indigenous visual arts and craft internationally.

At the time of writing, the report, having been only recently released, had not made a discernable impact.

ENDNOTES

1 The panel consisted of: broadcaster Jill Kitson, cartoonist Bruce Petty, arts entrepreneur Leo Schofield, artist Michael Leslie, designer Jenny Kee, academic Peter Spearritt, author Rodney Hall, author Thea Astley, filmmaker Gillian Armstrong and dancer, Graeme Murphy.