To whom it may concern,

The Australian Dance Council - Ausdance writes in response to the Arts Funding Program review discussion paper, specifically in relation to issues raised at 1.3 Peak and Service Organisations (pp 12 - 14).

Ausdance National is Australia's peak body for dance: educating, inspiring and supporting the dance community in reaching its potential as a dynamic force within local, national and international communities. As part of a network of Ausdance organisations working across Australia we design and deliver accessible and sustainable services and integrated programs to support the Australian dance community. Ausdance, as part of the World Dance Alliance, also facilitates a range of international connections and opportunities for local dance professionals.

Ausdance, formed by dancers for dancers, has been a core partner and leader within the dance sector in Australia for over thirty years. We have delivered forums, national youth dance festivals, the Australian Dance Awards, ground-breaking research and information sharing, innovative partnerships, and worked to ensure dance in Australia is recognised as a vibrant and dynamic community. Through the Ausdance network we have strong and respected connections with the broad dance sector across every mainland state and territory.

Outlined in the Arts Funding Program discussion paper, a three-pronged approach of a creative and diverse sector; audience development and participation; and improved business capacity is vital to building a vibrant and sustainable arts industry. Peak bodies undertaking work such as that of the Ausdance network, provide a framework of activity, advocacy and support in the furtherance of this three-pronged approach. Working holistic can be of great benefit for the disparate members within an arts area, allowing big picture issues to be progressed while artistic development and production is undertaken by companies and individuals. The significant advocacy role of peak bodies is informed by
their policy work, which is informed by their links through to the sector and the strong evidence base they bring. This work also feeds into capacity building of the sector and broader community education.

The need for coordinated support services and advocacy is something that remains recognised across the dance community, as demonstrated by the strong participation in the National Dance Forum 2013, held in Melbourne. 39 percent of participants at the Forum were from NSW, an increase from 26 percent at the 2011 Forum. Many attendees were assisted by their state peak body and arts funding organisation to attend, and spoke highly of the coordinated dialogue able to be facilitated by a peak body working in partnership with government funding and policy bodies.

It is the nature of peak activity in the arts sector that targeted government resourcing is vital in ensuring a consistent base for the delivery of services. Communities of practitioners and individuals access to resources can fluctuate and hence a fee-for-service model as proposed in the discussion paper would result in erosion of core services able to be delivered. Funding with a level of certainty and consistency allows peak bodies to develop longer term plans and assist the strategic development of the sector. Adequate resourcing of peak bodies is also vital to ensure their capacity to best fulfil the many roles they provide. If peaks are well resourced they can play important roles the sector does not have the capacity to do or aren’t best placed to deliver including policy and advocacy, sector development and education, and maintaining a central body of knowledge.

Working together, through peak bodies, the sector can deliver beneficial outcomes now and for the future across a range of sub-sectors. Ausdance, as just on peak body in the arts sector, has been operating for over thirty years - with strong relationships and programs developed over time. Benefits have been developed over many years and the ongoing work of the organisation in a shifting environment requires strong leadership and participation. It is evident a strong network nationally enriches Ausdance and being part of a unique network then in turn enhances each state member.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide feedback on this important discussion paper for Arts NSW. We looking forward to hearing the range of issues to be further explored with the focus of growing the creative and diverse arts and cultural sector in NSW.

Kind regards

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CEO - Ausdance National