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<td>Please use this template to provide comments on the Arts NSW Arts Funding Program Review discussion paper.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Name of Organisation: Opera Australia</td>
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<tr>
<td>Your Name: Anne-Marie McGinty, Government Relations Manager</td>
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<td>Phone Number:</td>
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<td>All submissions will be treated as public documents, unless you clearly indicate the contrary by marking all or part of the submission as ‘confidential’. Public submissions may be published in full on the Arts NSW website, including your personal information and/or the personal information of third parties contained in the submission.</td>
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A request made under the Freedom of Information Act 1982 for access to a submission marked confidential will be determined in accordance with that Act.

Do you want this submission to be treated as confidential? Yes ☐ No X

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<td>This template is provided as a guide for your response to the discussion paper. A summary of the Key Themes from the discussion paper is at the back of this template. The questions posed in the summary are provided as a stimulus for your response. You do not need to respond to each question posed.</td>
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Submissions should be made by 5pm Friday, 26 July 2013.

Arts NSW reserves the right not to consider late submissions.

Where possible, submissions should be made on the following template, and should be lodged electronically via the email address afpreview@arts.nsw.gov.au

Alternatively, submissions may be sent to the postal address below to arrive by the due date:

Arts Funding Program Review
Arts NSW
PO Box A226
SYDNEY SOUTH NSW 1235
1. WHO AND WHAT SHOULD BE SUPPORTED AND HOW?

This section of the discussion paper looks at:

- **Eligibility**
- **Organisations**
- **Peak and service organisations**
- **Individuals**

We welcome your views on these aspects of the Arts Funding Program and any other thoughts and ideas you may have on who, what and how.

Opera Australia acknowledges the commitment of the NSW Government to arts and culture, and more specifically Arts NSW’s ongoing support towards building a stronger and sustainable creative community. In doing so, Arts NSW’s actively contributes towards making NSW a more vibrant, dynamic and creative state. Working in partnership with the Australia Council to fund the MPA sector, the support of Arts NSW has also enabled Opera Australia to continue to enrich Australia’s cultural life with exceptional performing arts experiences.

In 2012, Opera Australia attracted over 540,000 people to over 769 performances, including mainstage productions, free events, schools and regional tours with further access provided through education programs, public broadcasting and cinema releases. This could not have been achieved without the commitment of Government program funding.

We understand funding as part of the National Framework for Government Support of the MPA sector has been adopted and will not be further scrutinised as part of the review of the AFP; however while this core funding enables Opera Australia to maintain its core programs we are limited in our ability to apply for support towards additional activities which bolster the Company’s work across several areas while addressing key government priorities. Programs we are currently unable to access include regional programs beyond touring, education programs, community partnership programs and international activities.

In giving consideration to the AFP review findings, we welcome Arts NSW’s development of NSW’s first Arts and Cultural Policy, and the opportunity to augment support for the arts across Government Departments to realise the potential of the creative industries in NSW.
2. STRUCTURING THE PROGRAM TO SUPPORT VIBRANT ARTS AND CULTURE IN NSW

This section of the discussion paper looks at:

- Programs and projects
- Supporting accessibility
- A diversity of art forms and disciplines

Your views, ideas and thoughts on shaping the Arts Funding Program to contribute to a vibrant arts and cultural sector in NSW.

Performing Arts Touring

While Opera Australia’s touring arm, Oz Opera has successfully secured support from Arts NSW towards the NSW leg of its national tour, the challenge to meet the application and delivery deadlines remains. The current timing restricts the opportunity to include additional performance dates in response to success and limits the ability for the Company to respond to funding advice from Playing Australia in a timely manner. Additionally, to optimise the effectiveness of Arts NSW Performing Arts Touring funding it is important that the program synchronises well with Playing Australia. The upcoming review of Playing Australia guidelines would seem to be an ideal opportunity for the two funding bodies to ensure optimisation of funding in meeting key objectives such as accessibility and excellence.

The Company’s tour is often planned years in advance. Each production is purpose-built for the sole purpose of regional touring without any capital city seasons to secure a strong box office to alleviate the upfront costs of building, designing and rehearsing a production on the scale that the art form requires. In light of this, the timing of funding advice arriving on the brink of the tour’s launch forces the Company to inherently absorb the risk (and cost) in presenting a tour which may not secure funding.

The significant cost in commissioning and touring an opera production to regional and remote Australia directly affects the viability of the tour. Continuing to limit regional tour funding to net touring costs and potentially not optimising funding between Playing Australia and Arts NSW directly impacts on supporting excellence in the art form. Opera by its very nature is complex and requires many people to realise a production. Without an opportunity to increase fees or ticket prices, reducing the overall budget will directly impact on the touring product and audience experience. It also means touring to a lesser number of venues which in turn directly impacts the accessibility of regional performances. State funding supporting additional activity beyond net touring costs is instrumental in realising a regional tour to its full potential. Eliminating the overlap in funding guidelines between Playing Australia and State Government funding programs is another means to achieving better funding outcomes for NSW.

State funding also enables the Company to supplement the tour’s performances with community engagement activities including pre and post-show talks with the performers and technical staff, education workshops and special functions. Building on the strong community response to date, the Company has also reconceptualised the community engagement program to be a
participatory experience by coordinating Regional Children’s Choirs to perform with the Company. Also for the first time in 2014 we will offer Regional Student Scholarships. While this would not be possible without funding towards touring costs, greater flexibility in the funding guidelines to support activity beyond net touring costs would provide an avenue to support greater community partnership programs which come at a significant additional expense to the touring budget. Coordinating and implementing these programs requires resourcing to cover salaries and preparation costs.
3. ADMINISTRATION OF THE PROGRAM

This section of the discussion paper looks at:

Assessment process
Getting the timing right
Measuring outcomes
Communication, access and transparency

Your contributions on effective administration of the Arts Funding Program.

Getting the timing right
Timing remains an ongoing challenge in balancing the need to secure funding and continue to plan and deliver high quality performing arts experiences to the diverse communities with which the Company engages. Harmonising submission deadlines and the timeliness of funding advice between the Arts NSW Performing Arts Touring program and Playing Australia would alleviate increasing financial pressures to present the tour. Bringing the Arts NSW funding deadline forward by at least three months would also contribute to this.

Assessment process
While we appreciate Arts NSW has continued to evolve and streamline the application process, by introducing online submissions, we believe there are elements which would benefit from further consideration.

Firstly, with the move to establish cross-art form assessment panels, there is limited scope to convene a panel with the necessary expertise to comprehensively review and evaluate all submissions. This is especially the case when extended work undertaken by MPA companies is evaluated in the same round as small to medium organisations.

We have also found the current word limits restrictive in trying to address the selection criteria in context of the volume of work the Company does in researching, building and presenting mainstage performances, regional touring, community partnership projects and digital media.

While being concise is valuable in a process which attracts a significant number of applications, our concern is that the application process inherently makes MPA companies less competitive and hinders the opportunity for MPA companies to foster the further development of artistic vibrancy across the state.

As the national opera company, we aim to reach the widest possible audience undertaking meaningful community engagement and education programs which requires significant resourcing. Given this work sits outside of our core funding activities, without State Government project support, this work cannot be realised.

Arts education
Arts education programs continue to be a priority for Opera Australia. The Oz Opera Schools Tour will reach over 45,000 students in NSW in 2013, and this would not be possible without support from Arts NSW. In addition to the NSW Schools Tour the Company delivers a variety of
education programs across the primary, secondary and tertiary education sector.

We believe in light of the adoption of the first national arts school curriculum and the State Government becoming a signatory to the Federal Better Schools Program it would be untimely to withdraw or diminish engagement with school aged students. With the continued dwindling of arts education funding across government departments we urge Arts NSW to continue to support this important work which nurtures an understanding of the performing arts and a growing audience base.
4. Addressing the Future…

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<th>We welcome your thoughts on how best to deliver the Arts Funding Program with an eye on what’s to come.</th>
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The AFP needs to continue to address the challenge of supporting a rich and diverse creative community, which will not only directly contribute to the creative identity of NSW but promote the value of the arts to current stakeholders and the broader community. We believe there is opportunity to further streamline working across government departments with Arts NSW actively brokering these inroads flanked by the first NSW Arts and Cultural Policy.

The AFP should continue to prioritise strategic directions and initiatives to support and lead the sector to take the necessary risks to stretch beyond their conventional business models and take an entrepreneurial approach in developing new pathways in engaging the Australian community. This may lead to significant support and investment from other government departments, for example the investment funding Opera Australia currently receives from Destination NSW for Handa Opera on Sydney Harbour. Support for like projects in their infancy would be a valuable objective for the Arts NSW funding program.

We are on the verge of a great opportunity in harnessing unprecedented virtual connectivity nationally with the roll-out of the NBN. It is our hope the State Government sees the potential for the arts to develop new and exciting ways to engage using this platform beyond populating the Internet with free content. The real-time capacity of this technology has the potential to inspire and deliver previously unimaginable projects and collaborations, however this work comes at a real cost to artists and arts organisations. This work requires considerable research and development and remains a business risk when drawing resources from another part of the business to realise. It is our hope that Arts NSW will commit to mitigating this risk, and provide strategic initiatives to support it.

By leveraging Government investment, we have built on our mainstage program to create memorable performing arts experiences across the state, nationally and internationally; on stage, on screen and via digital broadcast. Without continued and ongoing commitment by the State Government this would not be possible.
Thank you for your response.
SUMMARY: KEY THEMES

1. Who and what should be supported and how?

1.1. Eligibility
   - How do current eligibility requirements impact on you, your organisation or arts and cultural activities?
   - Are current eligibility criteria sufficiently meeting the current needs of the arts and cultural sector?

1.2. Organisations
   - Is funding fewer organisations at higher levels to assist their capacity desirable, or should more organisations be funded at lower levels to assist a greater spread of funding?
   - Is the introduction of explicit and transparent criteria around eligibility for Multi-year Program Funding desirable – if so, what criteria might be considered?
   - How can government work to strengthen organisational capacity in the arts and cultural sector?
   - Are current Program Funding terms (generally 1 to 3 years) appropriate?
   - Is it useful to think in terms of emerging and established organisations and approach their funding in different ways?
   - How should pathways and transition into and out of Program Funding categories best be addressed?
   - How can the AFP be better structured to encourage/secure investment from other sources (eg philanthropic and private)?
   - Are there other ways/models (including non-financial) to effectively strengthen arts and cultural organisations?

1.3. Peak and service organisations
   - Should peak and service organisations continue to access funding from within the AFP to fulfil the roles above?
   - Would some of the services above be better provided on a fee-for-service basis? If so, when might that be appropriate?
   - Does the current devolved funding model deliver effective outcomes - why?
   - Are there improvements that could assist the efficiency and effectiveness of devolved funding programs?

1.4. Individuals
   - Is it useful to offer specific funding pathways around emerging, mid-career or established artists, regional artists, international activities, specific art forms etc?
   - How effective are small grants programs (under $5,000)?
   - Do other funding bodies (eg the Australia Council), philanthropic organisations and funding platforms already provide sufficient support for individuals?
   - Are there opportunities to partner with eg philanthropic and crowd funding mechanisms to maximise support for individuals?
   - Is it desirable for funded organisations to provide greater assistance and opportunities for individuals? If so, how could this be encouraged?
   - Are there other ways/models (including non-financial) to effectively assist individuals?

2. Structuring the program to support vibrant arts and culture in NSW

2.1. Programs and Projects
   - Is the current balance between Program and Project Funding appropriate - why?
   - Are there new project funding categories that should be considered for support?
   - Are there current project categories that should be removed?
   - How can emerging issues, new activity and innovation most effectively be facilitated?
2.2 Supporting accessibility

- Are current AFP priority areas for access and participation still appropriate/relevant?
- Do you believe the AFP is achieving appropriate access for priority groups? If not, are there alternative ways to achieve participation from priority groups?
- Can programs supporting digital delivery assist to increase wider participation generally and in regional and remote areas? What other mechanisms might also exist?

2.3 A diversity of art forms and disciplines

- Does the current AFP provide appropriate opportunities for funding of your art form/discipline? If not, how can a more diverse mix of art forms/disciplines, including new and emerging art forms/disciplines, most effectively be facilitated?
- Should strategies around specific art forms/disciplines be introduced? If so, why and how?

3. Administering the program

3.1 Assessment processes

- Are there improvements that can be made to the current assessment processes?
- Are the current assessment criteria still suitable?
- Is there merit in allocating greater weight to specific assessment criteria? If so, which criteria?
- Do you believe the current assessment process results in funding for activities of high artistic/cultural quality? If not, how can this be best achieved?

3.2 Getting the timing right

- How do current timeframes impact on you/your organisation (including release of funding guidelines, application dates, availability of application forms, funding announcements and reporting)?
- What are the most critical issues for you/your organisation which Arts NSW should consider when setting timeframes?

3.3 Measuring outcomes

- How do current reporting requirements impact you/your organisation?
- Are there ways in which current reporting requirements can be improved?
- Are there better ways to measure both qualitative outcomes (artistic vibrancy, audience appreciation) and quantitative outputs (audience numbers, employment statistics etc)?
- Some reporting harmonisation with other funding agencies is currently in place. Is harmonisation working? If not, what improvements can be made?

3.4 Communication, access and transparency

- Are you aware of the current pathways through which you can obtain information and/or seek advice on the current AFP – are they sufficient?
- Is there sufficient transparency around the way the AFP is administered and decisions are made? If not, how could this be improved?
- Are the expectations of Government clearly identified within the current AFP (eg objectives of funding, current priorities)?
- Do you believe Arts NSW’s annual Client Feedback Survey provides an effective opportunity to feedback on programs and services? Are there other ways feedback can be encouraged?

4. Addressing the Future...

- How can the AFP most effectively develop, evolve and adapt to the contemporary needs of the arts and cultural sector?
- Are you aware of other programs and models for investing in the arts and cultural sectors which might be considered as part of this Review? If so, why do you consider them to be effective?
- Should there be a stronger focus on innovation and new practices?
- What are your top three priorities for a revitalised arts funding program?
- What else would you like to tell us?