**LETTER FROM THE VISUAL ARTS SECTOR**

Dear …

I am writing to express my great concern about the changes to arts funding arrangements contained in the Federal Budget released in May 2015.

I am particularly concerned that the reduction in Australia Council funding will impact badly on individual artists and the small to medium arts organisations that are the engine room supporting Australian innovative contemporary arts practice. This could result in a loss of employment for the many people who work in these private and public arts small businesses. The arts make a substantial contribution both to the economy and the social and cultural wellbeing of the community. I believe this is now in considerable jeopardy.

There is still much clarification required. However, in particular, I seek answers to the following questions:

* On the basis of what evidence is the change to management of the Government’s arts funding being proposed?
* How can the Arts Minister guarantee that the programs now to be managed by the Ministry for the Arts will adhere to the principles of peer assessment and ‘at arms length’ from government?
* To reverse diminishing levels of arts funding at both federal and state government levels for the visual arts sector, what new funds will the Minister find to support the excellent arts activity that currently is not funded by existing programs?
* Why establish a new parallel funding program which will be a duplication of existing arrangements and a waste of the tax payers’ money which has until now, been used to provide grants to the arts?
* How does the Minister intend to redress the economic instability of the majority of arts organisations, caused by the suspension of the Australia Council’s six-year funding program?

I support the National Association for the Visual Arts (NAVA)’s call for a proper process of research and consultation to investigate what is needed to build the strength of the arts in Australia and a rich cultural life for our country.

I ask that you urgently intervene to reverse the Arts Budget decision.

Yours sincerely,