

The Hon. Tony Burke MP
Minister for Home Affairs, Immigration and Citizenship, Cyber Security and the Arts
PO Box 6022
House of Representatives
Parliament House
Canberra ACT 2600

22 October 2025

By Email: Tony.burke.mp@aph.gov.au

Dear Minister Burke,

We the undersigned artists from across Australia, who represent 85% of the artists who have exhibited four times or more in the Sculpture by the Sea exhibitions in either Perth or Sydney in the last 20 years, are writing this open letter to assure you how important the exhibitions are for Australian culture, our personal careers and to ask for your urgent help.

Sculpture by the Sea enables us to present our artwork to a combined 700,000+ people each year in Perth and Sydney and to a world-wide digital audience of millions of people. In addition, at least 18,000 school students visit the two exhibitions each year and people with disability visit or take part in the free Access & Inclusion Program. Few, if any, Australian art exhibitions have Sculpture by the Sea's international reputation with artists around the world.

We wish to express our surprise and great disappointment that Creative Australia does not provide any funding or appear to have any interest in Sculpture by the Sea, despite the response to the exhibition by artists and the Australian public.

With the end of the Catalyst Fund and the RISE Fund, Sculpture by the Sea no longer receives any Federal Government arts funding. How is this possible? Who is making these decisions at Creative Australia? How can Creative Australia, just like the Australia Council before it, ignore our work year after year and not provide core multi-year funding? How can Creative Australia ignore the unprecedented response by the people of Australia to the exhibition?

That Creative Australia is allowed to ignore the globally unique level of interaction between the people of Australia and our artwork shows a disconnect between what Australian artists and the Australian public want from the management of public arts funding in Australia.

This year *Sculpture by the Sea, Bondi* was in jeopardy and Creative Australia did not even answer the organisers requests for meetings, let alone provide funding. This calls into serious question the management of public arts funding in Australia.

Please do not let Creative Australia hide behind the excuse that all grant applications are reviewed by Peer Assessment panels. The Arts community are well aware that

the panel members are chosen by Creative Australia from a pool of friends and colleagues who understand what is expected of them to keep the pool of Creative Australia's funds available for the same group of friends and colleagues. Very few of us have applied to Creative Australia (or the Australia Council before it) for funding for decades. It is a closed shop.

The Sculpture by the Sea exhibitions have transformed Sculpture as an Art form in Australia and the relationship of the Australian public with sculpture, providing previously unavailable support to artists from across Australia in the form of:

- A highly regarded international exhibition in which we can participate without having to freight or travel overseas;
- The opportunity to present our artworks to the Australian public in unprecedented numbers;
- Fundraising and advocacy on our behalf that has resulted in consistently increased financial assistance for artists from the private and public sectors until 2024 when Federal Government arts funding for the exhibition ceased;
- Mentoring and advice on exhibiting outdoors that has considerably increased the practical and professional skills of two generations of Australian artists;
- Collective income to exhibiting artists of \$2M - \$3M a year that has transformed the lives and professional opportunities of a great many artists;
- The opportunity to engage directly with hundreds of thousands of school children from NSW, WA and the ACT across two generations as they start their journey of appreciating sculpture; and
- National and international networking opportunities with other artists and collectors.

Can Creative Australia say it has done this? Can you imagine how much greater these benefits for Australia and Australian artists would be if the visual arts in Australia was led by arts advocates who could see the opportunities presented by Sculpture by the Sea and got behind the exhibition? We can, and despair that our nation's arts bureaucrats are allowed to get away with ignoring the public and artists' response to the exhibition.

We would like to ask, has Creative Australia raised with the organisers of Sculpture by the Sea its concerns regarding payment to artists or payment by artists at the exhibition? This is an important question given it is effectively the reason Creative Australia gave you, and you gave to the Australian public for not providing Federal funding to Sculpture by the Sea.

It is a strange form of bureaucratic logic to read the Federal Government will not fund the artists in Sculpture by the Sea out of a supposedly heartfelt concern for artists welfare, when we the artists want to exhibit in Sculpture by the Sea and want the government to fund the exhibition.

As Creative Australia has no interest in Sculpture by the Sea, and even if it did no significant multi-year funding is available from Creative Australia until 2029, we respectfully ask that you provide direct multi-year funding for *Sculpture by the Sea*,

Bondi on a level that is commensurate with the importance of the exhibition to the people and artists of Australia for the same amount of \$750,000 a year that the Prime Minister arranged through Austrade for *Sculpture by the Sea, Cottesloe*. This grant will enable the financial support for the artists to be increased and give the necessary financial support to the not for profit organisation that stages the exhibition.

We understand that your advice comes from Creative Australia. However, you have been misinformed. Please use your position as Minister for the Arts to independently see beyond that advice and see what the artists of Australia and the Australian public have created in *Sculpture by the Sea*. Please be the Minister for the Arts and not the Minister for Creative Australia.

Next year is the 30th year since *Sculpture by the Sea, Bondi* began, please visit the exhibition this year to see for yourself the public response and join us in celebrating next year's milestone by providing the core multi-year funding the organisation needs to keep up with the artists and public response to the exhibition.

We, the artists listed below, request a reply to the questions asked in this letter. The addresses for correspondence to the signatories to this letter are: Olga Cironis of East Fremantle, Western Australia and Phil Spelman of Queanbeyan, NSW.

Yours sincerely,

Olga Cironis, East Fremantle, Western Australia 6158
Phil Spelman, Queanbeyan, NSW 2620
Angus Adameitis, Athelstone, South Australia 5076
Joel Adler, Collingwood, Victoria 3066
Kathy Allam, Peppermint Grove, Western Australia, 6011
Ayad Alqaraghooli, Dianella, Western Australia 6059
George Andric, Allenby Gardens, South Australia 5009
Kerrie Argent, Lake Grace, Western Australia 6353
Paul Bacon, Avalon, NSW 2107
David Ball, Wides Meadow, NSW 2577
Lucy Barker, Wahroonga, NSW 2076
Geoffrey Bartlett, Collingwood, Victoria 3068
Professor Robert Barnstone, Newtown, NSW 2042
Anthony Battaglia, Darlinghurst, NSW 2010
Dr Bronwyn Berman, Castlereagh, NSW 2749
Suzie Bleach, Wapengo, NSW 2550
Rae Bolotin, Lane Cove, NSW 2066
Linda Bowden, Erskineville, NSW 2043
Geoffrey Drake-Brockman, Nedlands, Western Australia 6009
Tim Burns, York, Western Australia 6302

Paul Caporn, Ashfield, Western Australia 6054
Gary Christian, Mona Vale, NSW 2577
Daniel Clemmett, Dorroughby, NSW 2480
Elaine Clocherty, Cowaramup, Western Australia 6284
Sue Corbet, Fairhaven, Victoria 3231
Steve Croquet, Gilgandra, NSW 2827
Jon Denaro, Hamilton Hill, Western Australia 6163
Merle Topsis Davis, Gelorup, Western Australia 6230
Tony Davis, Gelorup, Western Australia 6230
Tom de Munk-Kerkmeer, Northam, Western Australia 6401
Mimi Dennett, Brunswick Heads, NSW 2483
Ken Draper, Torbay, Western Australia 6330
Kate Dunn, Pennant Hills, NSW 2120
Sharyn Egan, Yangebup, Western Australia 6164
Ben Fasham, Clayton South, Victoria 3169
Harrie Fasher, Portland, NSW 2847
Norton Flavel, Winthrop, Western Australia, 6150
Mandy Francis, Etalong, NSW 2257
Fiona Gavino, White Gum Valley, Western Australia, 6162
Jane Gillings, Avoca, NSW 2251
Bjorn Godwin, Chippendale, NSW 2008
Ron Gomboc Cit. WA, Middle Swan, Western Australia 6056
Miik Green, Maylands, Western Australia 6051
Simon Grimes, Crows Nest, NSW 2065
Robert Hague, Newport, Victoria 3015
Clara Hali, Blackheath, NSW 2785
Dr Richard Hammer, Daglish, Western Australia 6008
Stephen Harrison, Murrumbateman, NSW 2592
Geoff Harvey, St Peters, NSW 2044
Simon Hodgson, Empire Bay, NSW 2257
Dave Horton, Stanwell Tops, NSW 2508
Lucy Humphrey, Avalon, NSW 2107
Koichi Ishino, Hermitage Flat, NSW 2790
Greg James, Fremantle, Western Australia 6160
Greg Johns, Bellevue Heights, South Australia 5050
Tony Jones OAM, East Fremantle, Western Australia 6158
Ben Juniper, Wembley, Western Australia 6014
Ionas Kaltenbach, Crestwood, NSW 2620
Akira Kamada, Tomerong, NSW 2540
Orest Keywan, Botany, NSW 2019

Sally Kidall, Thirroul, NSW 2515
Sangsug Kim, Dianella, Western Australia 6059
Stephen King, Walcha, NSW 2354
Richie Kuhaupt, Beaconsfield, Western Australia, 6162
Jina Lee, Darlington, Western Australia, 6070
Barbara Licha, Maroubra, NSW 2035
Michael Le Grand, Emeritus Fellow of the ANU, Murrumbateman, NSW 2592
Jonathan Leahey, St Kilda, Victoria 3182
Jed Long, Bellevue Hill, NSW 2031
Leo Loomans, O'Connor, Australian Capital Territory 2602
Janine McAullay Bott, Wattleup, Western Australia 6166
Hugh McLachlan, Deloraine, Tasmania 7304
Angela McHarrie, City Beach, Western Australia 6015
Karl Meyer, Parawa, South Australia 5203
Britt Mikkelsen, Maylands, Western Australia 6051
Dale Miles, Loftus, NSW 2232
Ingrid Morely, Jenolan, NSW 2790
Anne Neil, North Fremantle, Western Australia 6159
Geoff Overheu, Gingin, Western Australia 6503
James Parrett, Eureka, Victoria 3480
Graeme Pattison, Lilyfield, NSW 2040
Sonia Payes, Prahan, Victoria 3181
Denise Pepper, Bayswater, Western Australia 6053
April Pine, Welshpool, Western Australia 6106
Juan Pablo Pinto, Coogee, NSW 2034
John Petrie, Clovelly, NSW 2031
Peter Phillips, Toodyay, Western Australia 6566
Sandra Pitkin, Dorriggo, NSW 2453
Sallie Portnoy, Queenscliff, NSW 2096
Michael Purdy, Berry, NSW 2535
Hugh Ramage, Redfern, NSW 2016
Jean-Marc Rivalland, Hamilton Hill, Western Australia 6163
Jimmy Rix, Malmsbury, Victoria 3446
Ron Robertson-Swann OAM, Botany, NSW 2019
James Rogers, Walcha, NSW 2354
Ayako Saito, Botany, NSW 2019
Anthony Sawrey, Daylesford, Victoria 3460
Gillie Schattner, Botany, NSW 2019
Marc Schattner, Botany, NSW 2019
Dr Nien Schwarz, Hon. Snr Lecturer, Edith Cowan University, Forth, Tasmania 7310

Hui Selwood, Hill End, NSW 2850
Paul Selwood, Wollombi, NSW 2325
Fatih Semiz, Brighton, Victoria 3186
Anne Shackman, Lake Macquarie, NSW 2280
Shaumyika Sharma, Leeming, Western Australia 6149
Tania Spencer, Lake Grace, Western Australia 6353
Sharon Stevens, Bronte, NSW 2024
Sally Stoneman, Maranup, Western Australia 6256
Benjamin Storch, Albert Park, Victoria 3206
Dominique Sutton, Eureka, NSW 2480
Elyssa Sykes-Smith, Bomaderry, NSW 2541
Yuko Takahashi, Tuart Hill, Western Australia 6060
Dr Jon Tarry, Belmont, Western Australia 6104
Marcus Tatton, Allens Rivulet, Tasmania 7150
Jarrod Taylor, St James, Western Australia 6102
Andy Townsend, Wapengo, NSW 2550
Steve Tepper, North Fremantle, Western Australia 6159
Stephen Tero, East Fremantle, Western Australia 6158
Dr Peter Tilley, Carrington, NSW 2294
Dr Richard Tipping, Maitland, NSW 2320
Charlie Trivers, Wamberal, NSW 2260
Ken Unsworth AM, Birchgrove, NSW 2041
Andrea Vinkovic, Lesmurdie, Western Australia 6076
Rhianon West, Koolewong, NSW 2256
Samantha Whittingham, Woolloomooloo, NSW 2011
Christabel Wigley, Somers, Victoria 3927
Rima Zabaneh, Ardross, Western Australia 6153

c.c.

Nicollette Boele MP, Member for Bradfield
Kate Chaney MP, Member for Curtin
Senator Sarah Hanson-Young, Greens Spokesperson for the Arts
Julian Lesser, Shadow Minister for the Arts
Senator David Pocock
Sophie Scamps MP, Member for Mackellar
Allegra Spender MP, Member for Wentworth
Zali Steggall OAM MP, Member for Warringah