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Arts funding again heading in the wrong direction

More cuts to Screen Australia in yesterday's mid-year financial statement show the Coalition continues to have a blind spot about the creative industries, regardless of who is Prime Minister, says the Media, Entertainment & Arts Alliance.

The cuts totaling \$52 million to the arts and communications budgets are on top of almost \$105 million that was cut from the Australia Council in May and \$51 million from Screen Australia over the past 18 months.

MEAA chief executive officer Paul Murphy said after a promising start, the latest cuts threatened to evaporate any goodwill from the arts community towards the Turnbull Government and the new Arts Minister, Mitch Fifield.

He said any further cuts to Screen Australia could put the development of new home-grown film and television programming in doubt.

"Taking money out of Screen Australia will directly impact on domestic production," Mr Murphy said.

"While we welcome any government support for foreign productions that create jobs for Australian-based performers and crew, it should not be at the expense of the local industry.

"Financial incentives for foreign productions need to be treated as part of a holistic approach rather than as one-offs which rob Peter to pay Paul, with a review of the location offset critical to attract major motion pictures to be produced in Australia and provide jobs in our creative industries.

"Unfortunately, yesterday's cuts also raise fresh concerns about the Coalition's commitment to the creative industries.

"Senator Fifield has shown a greater willingness to consult with the arts community, and MEAA welcomed the partial restoration of funding to the Australia Council.

"However, it is disappointing that the government has totally ignored the recommendations of just over a week ago by a Senate inquiry for funding to the Australia Council and Screen Australia to be fully reinstated.

"Senator Fifield and the Turnbull Government must be careful to avoid polarising the arts community further."

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