



MEDIA RELEASE: Saturday, June 4, 2016

Coalition should match ALP commitment to restore OzCo funding

The Media, Entertainment and Arts Alliance, the union and industry advocate for media and arts professionals, welcomes today's pledges by the Labor Party to fully restore funding to the Australia Council and boost local drama on the ABC if it is elected on July 2.

MEAA Equity director Zoe Angus said these bold commitments in Labor's arts policy released today now puts the ball back in the court of the Coalition parties to reconsider the disastrous cuts to the Australia Council and the ABC in recent Budgets.

"We are very happy that Labor has made good on its previous verbal promises to restore funding to the Australia Council by including this measure in the arts policy it will take to the federal election," Ms Angus said.

"Twelve months down the track we are now seeing the devastating impact of the cuts to the Australia Council with dozens of arts organisations at risk of closure, including well-known names like Red Stitch, Force Majeure and *Meanjin*.

"These organisations play a crucial role in nurturing and developing local talent and the impact of these cuts will be felt by our performers, crew and other creatives for many years to come.

"We are pleased that the Catalyst funding body would be scrapped and that money redirected to the Australia Council, along with an extra \$20 million a year.

"Allowing significant decisions about arts funding to be made from the office of the Arts Minister is wrong, and abolishing Catalyst would mean that arts funding would again undergo an independent process overseen by the Australia Council.

"While we welcome Labor's commitment, we now call on the Coalition to acknowledge the folly of these cuts and also pledge to fully restoring the \$73 million that has been stripped from the Australia Council."

Ms Angus said Labor's pledge of \$60 million to the ABC to produce local drama would be a huge boost for Australian stories being shown locally and internationally, providing work for thousands of performers, technicians, crew and writers.

"We are disappointed that no major party has yet committed to fully restoring the more than \$250 million that has been stripped from the ABC since 2014, but Labor's extra \$60 million is a big step in the right direction," she said.

"We now challenge the Coalition to match it."

For more information contact:

Mark Phillips – phone: 03 9691 7105; email: mark.phillips@meaa.org

📍 PO Box 723 Strawberry Hills NSW 2012 📞 1300 656 513

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