

A spokesman for Senator Scott Ludlam said:

Senator Ludlam's comments were made in response to a journalist's question about the inquiry into the arts funding cuts, including that morning's public hearings in Melbourne, of which Senator Ludlam was a participating member. They combine personal interpretation of the testimony and guidelines and the Senator's personal views of the realities of how the government's proposed changes will operate.

[His] comment reflects on the standards set out in the guidelines, Senator Ludlam's personal view and the view of submitters to the Inquiry.

The draft [guidelines](#) state:

The Ministry for the Arts may moderate assessments to ensure each assessment has properly considered the funding program objectives, Government policy objectives, and issues of overall funding balance. These processes inform the recommendations made to the Minister for the Arts...

Applicants will usually be advised of the assessment outcome within six weeks of the recommendation date each quarter. Applicants will be advised of the assessment outcome in writing. Successful applicants will be listed in the Department's grants register, unless the Minister has obtained an exemption in accordance with the Commonwealth Grant Rules and Guidelines, paragraph 5.7. Unsuccessful applicants will be provided with feedback in writing.

As a result of these guidelines, there will be a number of circumstances under which the decisions made by the Minister and the Department will not be publicly available.

There is no requirement for the Minister to publicly release the outcomes of funding applications at the time they are made. There is no requirement for the Minister to publicly release information on unsuccessful funding applications. The Minister also has access to a possible exemption under the Grant Rules and Guidelines.

The only public reporting requirement in the guideline is for successful applications (for which the Minister does not have a reporting exemption).

This concern has been echoed by submitters and testimony to the inquiry, upon which Senator Ludlam was reflecting, including [Regional Arts Victoria](#) , who state:

not all funding outcomes will be made public, subject to the Minister's discretion in obtaining an exemption. The Australia Council adheres to the highest standards of transparency and accountability for all decision-making.

The description of "hand-picked" has been used by commentators, the media and arts community to describe the new arrangements.

Assessors are appointed by the department, over which the Minister has oversight. Short of any evidence to the contrary, the Minister would therefore have the capacity to accept or reject assessors of his choosing. The guidelines state:

The Ministry for the Arts will maintain a Register of Independent Assessors comprising sector and community representatives. The Ministry will advertise for expressions of interest and may also identify suitable persons to be invited to become assessors.

There is no suggestion in the published draft guidelines that the appointment process will not be subject to the usual Ministerial oversight exercised by departmental decisions. This comment also reflects Senator Ludlam's personal opinion and characterisation of this policy, that the Minister will be able to exert a wide range of control over the funding process, a view that has been expressed by the arts community and commentators.

This phrase also emphasises the significant differences between the "arm's length" approach taken by the Australian Council compared to the significant governmental oversight being proposed by the guidelines.

[His touring schedules] comment draws on testimony from Wednesday's Senate Inquiry to deliver a specific example of the level of control the Minister will be able to exercise under this new funding model.

Under the proposed guidelines:

Assessments will be carried out on an ongoing basis, in order of receipt, with recommendations usually made to the Minister for the Arts on a quarterly basis, in the last week of October, January, April and July each year.

The Minister has the final decision on whether to accept or reject their department's advice. As a result, applications from organisations seeking funding to tour projects would be subject to Ministerial approval, as would all other funding applications.

The testimony presented to the inquiry raised [concerns](#) that funding process would lead reduction in opportunities for organisations to tour, and Senator Ludlam was reflecting this testimony.

A spokesperson for Arts Minister, Senator George Brandis, said:

The National Program for Excellence in the Arts will be run in accordance with the Commonwealth Grants Rules and Guidelines and in a transparent manner with a wide range of projects able to apply. This is perfectly consistent with how many programs are run across the Government.

Recipients of grants from the National Program for Excellence in the Arts will be published on the Attorney-General's department website within 14 working days after the grant takes effect, as required under Commonwealth grants legislation.

Exemptions for public reporting of grants are very rare and require the approval of the Minister for Finance.

Full responses from Senator Scott Ludlam and Senator George Brandis

Written by The Conversation

The main reason for an exemption is if publication is contrary to the Privacy Act 1988, such as where publication of details would identify a witness at a royal commission or divulge an organisation's taxation information.

Independent assessors will be selected by the Ministry for the Arts, not the Minister. They will assist with the process of assessing grant applications to the program.

Read more <http://theconversation.com/full-responses-from-senator-scott-ludlam-and-senator-george-brandis-45862>