

Sydney, Australia, Wednesday 2 April 2003

Heads of national arts councils meet in Sydney

The seventh board meeting of IFACCA, the International Federation of Arts Councils and Culture Agencies, the first global network of arts funding agencies, concluded today in Sydney.

Although the secretariat has been Sydney-based since 2001, this is the first time that IFACCA's board, which represents six continents, has had the opportunity to visit Australia. IFACCA's aim is to create an international resource and meeting ground for all those whose public responsibility it is to support excellence and diversity in artistic endeavour.

The meeting, held at the Australia Council offices on 31 March-1 April, was chaired by Shirley L. Thomson CC, Emeritus Director of Canada Council. Also present were Doreen Nteta, CEO of the National Arts Council of South Africa; Risto Ruohonen, Chairman of the Arts Council of Finland; Susan Loh, Director Corporate Communications and Marketing, Singapore National Arts Council; and IFACCA's Executive Director, Sarah Gardner.

'We are impressed by the innovation shown in Australia Council programs,' said Dr Thomson. 'All over the world national arts funding agencies are faced by remarkably similar problems and finding effective strategies to address them can save precious arts resources. Opportunities to meet our international peers always reinforces the value in sharing knowledge and expertise, the original motivation for creating IFACCA', she said.

The board members were particularly gratified by the results of a recent survey of IFACCA's services. Responses from arts policy experts from over 36 countries were received, including such commendations as 'Congratulations are due to everyone involved in this exciting venture;' and 'it's impressive to see how much IFACCA has accomplished in such a short time'. IFACCA's pioneering work in online communications and research in arts policy has also been acknowledged by an invitation to speak to European cultural policy researchers at the *E-culture* conference in Croatia later this month.

The Rockefeller Foundation has also recognised the importance of IFACCA's global reach with a grant of US\$100,000, which will be used to facilitate information sharing and skills exchange programs between international arts agencies in developing countries.

The board also advanced plans for the Second World Summit on the Arts and Culture, to be held in Singapore on 23-26 November 2003. Jointly organised by IFACCA and the National Arts Council of Singapore, the Summit will play a vital role in bringing together people from arts and culture agencies from around the world to debate key issues.

Finally, the board welcomed to the Federation the national arts funding agencies of Wales, Namibia, Belgium (French Community) and St Vincent and the Grenadines, bringing to 32 the number of national members.

The meeting concluded with a cocktail party hosted by the Australia Council, giving Board members an opportunity to meet members of the Council, arts community and diplomatic corps.

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