

Handbook for Arts Queensland Peer Assessors

March 2025

Acknowledgement

The Queensland Government respectfully acknowledges the Traditional Owners and Custodians of this land.

We extend our respect to Elders, past and present, acknowledge the continuation of diverse cultural practices and knowledge systems of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.

We acknowledge that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander self-determination is a human right as enshrined in the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples.

The *Queensland Human Rights Act 2019* also recognises the particular significance of the right to self-determination of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples.

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1. Introduction

This handbook is a guide to Arts Queensland's Peer Assessment program. It outlines the important role Peer Assessors have in supporting arts and cultural funding decisions that support delivery of the Queensland Government's objectives for the community which include:

- safety where you live
- health services when you need them
- a better lifestyle through a stronger economy
- delivering a plan for Queensland's future that provides the infrastructure needed for a growing population and a world-class Olympic and Paralympic Games that leaves a positive legacy for Queenslanders.

Arts Queensland's approach to peer assessment ensures a strong and collaborative approach that represents the diversity of Queensland communities, including diverse representation on peer assessment panels such as regional location and experience, peers who are Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander or from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds, and peers who identify as d/Deaf or as a person with disability.

Why do we use peer assessment?

Independent peer assessment allows for arts sector representatives to support the achievement of policy objectives by providing an expert, open and accountable approach in recommending applications of merit for funding, to the Delegate. This is known as an 'arm's length' approach.

2. Peer Assessor roles and responsibilities

Arts Queensland Peer Assessors will work on a fund panel for the duration of their appointment. Panel membership reflects the expertise and experience required to review applications against the objectives of the fund.

Peer Assessors will assess the eligible applications as allocated by Arts Queensland and make funding recommendations to the Delegate.

Peer Assessors attending the moderation meeting will assess and consider each application on:

- its merit
- its comparison to other eligible applications
- whether the application provides value with money
- the ability of the applicant to successfully deliver activities
- the strength of the evidence base underpinning the proposed activity.

The Peers will provide justification for each recommendation, and additional grant conditions if warranted.

Budget limitations may mean not all commendable applications are able to be funded. Peer Assessment ensures all eligible applications undergo a robust evaluation and moderation process, so that panels agree upon the most meritorious applications to be recommended for funding within the available budget.

To support their role in the assessment process, Peer Assessors should ensure:

- they are familiar with their panel's funding program, its guidelines and application process
- they understand their obligations under the Queensland Public Service Code of Conduct and other legislation (outlined within this document) including reporting and managing conflicts of interest
- they can provide independent, evidence-based reviews of applications in a fair, transparent and consistent manner and by the agreed deadlines
- they are able to participate in panel meetings to discuss assessment and agree upon funding recommendations
- they can provide clear, concise, meaningful feedback on applications for Arts Queensland to provide to both successful and unsuccessful applicants and other government stakeholders
- they are able to participate in induction, moderation and other formal meetings as required.

In addition to the above, some panels may have a chairperson whose responsibilities include:

- chairing panel moderation meetings and ensuring panel members have opportunity to express their views
- clarifying or interpreting issues as they arise
- when required, leading (or making provision for) private discussions on cultural matters for Aboriginal and /or Torres Strait Islander peers
- confirming the list of applications recommended for approval and their ranking
- meeting with Arts Queensland or the Minister when required.

A Deputy Chairperson may also be selected for each panel and will act on behalf of the Chairperson in their absence or where they are unable to participate due to a conflict of interest. If neither the Chairperson or Deputy Chair can attend the meeting or identify a conflict of interest with the same applicant, Arts Queensland will delegate the role of Chairperson to another panel member.

The Panel may seek additional advice from industry experts to support moderation and recommendations.

3. Arts Queensland's expectations of Peer Assessors

Demonstrating high standards of conduct

Peer Assessors must demonstrate high standards of conduct at all times and not engage in any conduct which may directly or indirectly bring the Queensland Government, or the Peer Assessor Panel, into disrepute. Without limiting any other rights Arts Queensland may have, Arts Queensland may terminate, in its absolute discretion, this agreement with the Peer Assessor in the event that Arts Queensland considers that the Peer Assessor has engaged in any conduct that brings, or may bring, the Queensland Government, or the Peer Assessor Panel, into disrepute.

Conduct that may bring the Queensland Government, or the Peer Assessor Panel, into disrepute means any conduct that does, or has the potential to, adversely impact the reputation of, or community confidence in, the Queensland Government and the Peer Assessor Panel.

Declaring and managing conflicts of interest

Prior to assessment of applications, Peer Assessors are provided with a list of eligible applicants and project names to check for any conflicts of interest (COI). COIs can be:

- **Actual** – there is a conflict between official duties and personal or other official interests that is likely to influence decision making
- **Perceived** – other people see a conflict of interest between official duties and personal or other official interests
- **Potential** – there is a personal interest that does not conflict with duties, which could become an actual or perceived conflict in the future.

A COI can also present itself when a peer assessor has commenced review of an application. Peer Assessors should notify Arts Queensland as soon as they become aware of any COIs so that Arts Queensland can establish the level of the conflict of interest and determine the appropriate management action, if any, to be taken. For example, where a significant COI exists, Arts Queensland will remove access to the relevant applications for the conflicted Peer Assessor and they will not be able to participate in panel discussions and recommendations regarding those applications. See **Attachment A** for further details.

Confidentiality

As per the Queensland Public Service Code of Conduct, Peer Assessors are required to keep all application details, assessment, and moderation discussions confidential.

Peer Assessors **must not** discuss applications with applicants and should refer applicants to Arts Queensland.

Cultural Protocols

In line with Arts Queensland's Cultural Engagement Framework, the following protocols will guide peer assessors as they assess applications and will support culturally relevant conduct within peer assessment meetings:

- **Respect** - for Country and Culture in assessment processes including the right to question appropriate consultation and permissions in the use of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultural content and materials.
- **Space** - meetings (online and offline) provide safe, and sometimes First Nations-only spaces for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander assessors to discuss cultural matters privately.
- **Authenticity** - acknowledging that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peer assessors and arts practitioners are experts in cultural content and quality for their specific country.
- **Growth** – seeking and applying feedback from Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peers on the structure and format of grant programs to encourage greater participation from First Nations arts practitioners and organisations.
- **Self Determination** – Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander assessors' advice and decision-making is prioritised in relation to considerations of Indigenous cultural and intellectual property.
- **Reciprocity** – recognition that there may be a cultural obligation for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples to undertake activities in a way that ensures a two-way benefit for parties involved. The time and energy expended by an unsuccessful applicant should still result in a reciprocally positive outcome through the provision of feedback and assistance to improve subsequent applications.

Key documents

In addition to this Handbook, other key documents that Peer Assessors are required to be familiar with include:

- [Cultural Engagement Framework – Working with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander arts and cultures in Queensland](#)
- [Queensland Public Service Code of Conduct](#)
- [Arts Queensland General Funding Guidelines](#)
- [Fund specific guidelines.](#)

Working within Legislation

All peer assessment activity is subject to various legislative requirements, including documentation associated with assessment processes, such as recommendations, written advice from Peer Assessors and assessment notes. Legislation includes:

- [Queensland Public Service Code of Conduct](#)
- [Judicial Review Act 1991](#)
- [Public Records Act 2002](#)
- [Right to Information Act 2009](#)
- [Information Privacy Act 2009](#)
- [Anti-Discrimination Act 1991.](#)

To ensure Arts Queensland meets obligations under the above legislation, Peer Assessors are required to ensure:

- their assessment and scoring decisions are unbiased, clear, and based on evidence, published criteria and procedural fairness
- they provide independent and objective advice when making recommendations for funding and program improvement, with clear concise feedback comments supporting their recommendations

- they return to Arts Queensland any documents provided during the assessment process and any notes created to support their assessment process
- they do not share or discuss any information that is not publicly available, including not making public or media comments related to Arts Queensland funding programs, unless approved beforehand by Arts Queensland
- when making funding recommendations they consider how funding will be used by the applicant to benefit the people of Queensland.

Arts Queensland will work with Peer Assessors to ensure they understand their responsibilities and meet the standards of conduct expected of Peer Assessors.

Note: Without limiting any other rights Arts Queensland may have, Arts Queensland may terminate, in its absolute discretion, this agreement with the Peer Assessor in the event that Peer Assessors are repeatedly unable to fulfil their duties, do not meet the above expectations or breach the Queensland Public Service Code of Conduct.

4. Peer Assessor Management and Fees

Appointment

All Arts Queensland Peer Assessors appointed to recurring funds are recommended by an independent Selection Panel and are appointed to a panel by Arts Queensland's Deputy Director-General. The Deputy Director-General may appoint peers to one-off funding panels from within or outside this pool. Peer Assessors must have acquitted any outstanding Arts Queensland funding before joining a panel.

Peers Assessors are appointed for a period of 12-months to two years and may be eligible for re-appointment after their initial term expires. Peers may resign during that period by writing to Arts Queensland via email, this letter can include reasons for the resignation and any feedback on the program or peer assessment process. Where a casual vacancy occurs on a peer panel, the Deputy Director-General may appoint another person to fill that vacancy temporarily or for the rest of their predecessor's term.

Before being appointed, Peer Assessors will need to sign the Peer Assessor Agreement submitted via Arts Queensland's online grants portal, SmartyGrants. A copy of the Agreement can be found in **Attachment B**.

Peers will also be asked to sign a Deed of Confidentiality and Privacy.

Induction

All Peer Assessors are required to participate in an online induction session (or review a prerecorded induction) prior to the first meeting of their panel. Induction will cover:

- Overview of Arts Queensland policy frameworks
- The roles and obligations of Peer Assessors, Arts Queensland, and others
- The Queensland Public Service Code of Conduct
- Objectives and Criteria for Arts Queensland funding
- Applications assessment process
- Best practice approaches to consistency in assessment
- Administration processes including invoicing and payment
- Using SmartyGrants as a Peer Assessor
- General and fund specific guidance on how to assess.

Communications

Arts Queensland publishes a list of current Peer Assessors for recurring funds on our website but does not publish the details of the individual panels they serve on.

Peer Assessment Fees and Expenses

Peer Assessors who are eligible for payment, will be paid per application assessed and for induction and meeting attendance.

Peer Assessors who identify with any of the following **are not** eligible for payment:

- employees of Federal or State governments
- employees of semi-government organisations and statutory authorities (Federal or State)
- employees of state government owned corporations and colleges.

Employees of local government and/or local government-owned corporations and colleges are eligible to claim payment if their appointment as a Peer Assessor is not connected to their employment and their participation in the assessment is undertaken outside of work hours.

Peer Assessors should confirm with Arts Queensland if they have any questions about their eligibility to claim payments for participating in the process.

Fee schedule

For the majority of funding programs, payment rates for participating as a Peer Assessor are outlined in the below table.

Application Assessment	
Activity	Less than 4 hours
Application Assessment – one off funding application	\$30 each
Application Assessment – multi-year funding application	\$50 each

Induction Training and Meeting Attendance		
Activity	Less than 4 hours	More than 4 hours
Induction and training	\$141	\$282
Moderation Meeting (Panel)	\$141	\$282
Moderation Meeting (Chair)	\$195	\$390
Other Meetings as Required	\$141	\$282

Some funding programs may have greater complexity and/or longer assessment or moderation processes. Arts Queensland will notify potential peers of assessment and meeting fees when recruiting bespoke panels for these funds.

Expenses

If an in-person meeting is required, Arts Queensland will advise panel members in advance, the location, what travel and accommodation expenses will be reimbursed, and the approval process required prior to peer assessors incurring any travel related expenses.

Claiming fees and expenses

To claim approved fees and expenses, Peer Assessors need to submit a Vendor Maintenance Form along with an invoice outlining the following information:

- the name of the fund the Peer Assessor is working with
- the number of application assessments and panel meetings the invoice covers
- bank details so that payment can be made through Electronic Funds Transfer (EFT)
- GST added if registered for GST
- ABN, if the Peer Assessor has one.
- Peer Assessors without an ABN must submit a completed Statement by a Supplier form which can be found at: <https://www.ato.gov.au/Forms/Statement-by-a-supplier-not-quoting-an-ABN/>.

Arts Queensland will upload a form for the invoice and Vendor Maintenance Form to be submitted in SmartyGrants.

Please note: Arts Queensland cannot give advice regarding taxation or legal obligations. Further information is available from the [ATO's website](#).

5. Availability planning

Pre-moderation meeting assessment

For recurring funding programs, Peer Assessors will be contacted prior to the funds opening with details of assessment periods and relevant proposed moderation/meeting dates to help Peers schedule time to assess applications and attend panel meetings.

For one-off funding programs, peers will be advised on the assessment periods and proposed moderation/meeting dates when invited to join the panel.

Peer Assessors are expected to complete the assessment of applications within the designated timeframe to allow the moderation meeting to go ahead on the planned date, and to avoid delaying the approval process and notification date.

Panel moderation meetings

Panel moderation meetings will most likely occur online but may be held in person at the discretion of Arts Queensland.

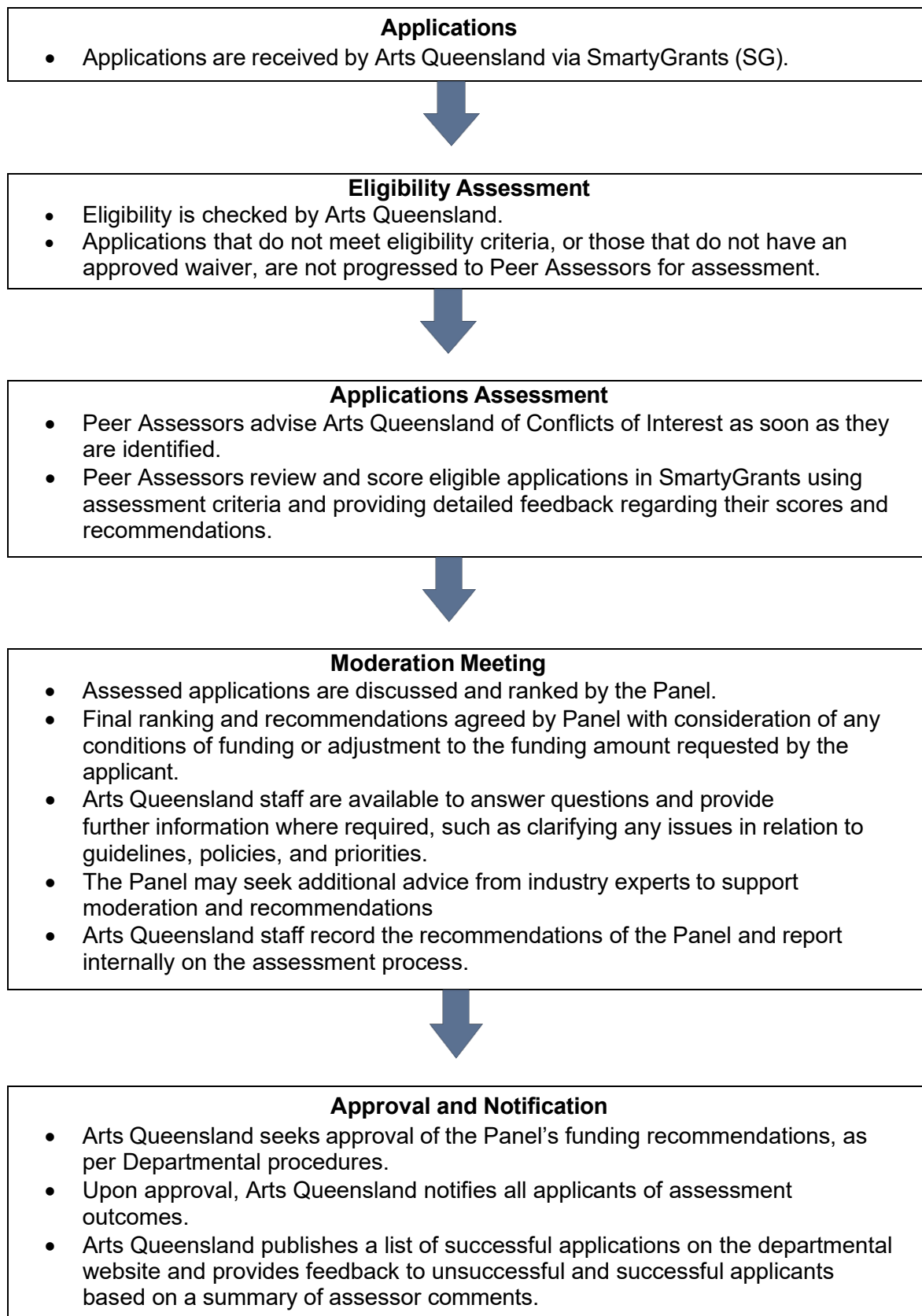
Meetings require a minimum of 66% panel member attendance to proceed and will occur in business hours. They may, however, be scheduled outside of business hours to suit the panel's needs.

Arts Queensland may convene additional meetings as required.

This handbook will be reviewed and updated as needed, and Peer Assessors will be provided with updated versions of the handbook when any changes are made.

Peer Assessors can provide feedback about Arts Queensland's peer assessment processes and funding programs at any time by emailing consultation@arts.qld.gov.au.

6. Overview of the application assessment process



Attachment A: Conflicts of Interest

Managing conflicts of interest ensures the decision-making process is transparent. Conflicts of interest can be:

- **Actual** – we currently have a conflict between our official duties and our personal or other official interests that is likely to influence our decision
- **Perceived** – other people see us as having a conflict of interest between our official duties and our personal or other official interests
- **Potential** – we have a personal interest that does not conflict with our duties, which could become an actual or perceived conflict in the future.

To ensure the integrity of the panel process, Peer Assessors are required to declare any conflicts of interest that exist or are likely to arise in the performance of duties as soon as they become aware of them. Some conflicts Peer Assessors will be aware of when they start in the role, such as their employer or organisations they volunteer for, or family members in the arts and cultural sector. These should be declared when the peer completes their acceptance of the Peer assessor agreement.

Examples of conflicts of interest

Common examples of actual or perceived Conflicts of Interest include, but are not limited to:

- where a Peer Assessor or their employer is likely to gain financial benefit directly or indirectly from a grant
- where a Peer Assessor or member of their immediate family or a close associate has applied for funds or is named in the application
- where a Peer Assessor or member of their immediate family or a close associate is a Chair, board member or member of an organisation which has applied for funds
- where a Peer Assessor or member of their immediate family or a close associate is a contractor or advisor to the applicant
- personal relationships that go beyond the level of a professional working relationship
- personal beliefs or attitudes that influence the impartiality of advice given
- where a Peer Assessor or member of their immediate family or a close associate is in dispute with someone mentioned in the application.

What happens if there is a conflict of interest

If there is any possibility of a conflict of interest, or a perception of a conflict of interest, Peer Assessors must bring this to the attention of Arts Queensland as soon as possible.

Arts Queensland will establish the level of the conflict of interest and determine the appropriate management action, if any, to be taken.

Potential conflicts of interest may be dealt with in several ways, depending on their significance. These include:

- recording the details of the disclosure and taking no further action because the potential for conflict is minimal and is eliminated by the disclosure
- the Peer Assessor member withdrawing from any decision-making process for the application in question
- the Peer Assessor withdrawing from any involvement in the assessment round.

Peer Assessors can find further information and examples in [Managing Conflicts of Interest in the Public Sector](https://www.integrity.qld.gov.au/assets/document/catalogue/icac_info_sheets/Managing_conflicts_of_interest_in_the_public_sector_toolkit.pdf) (https://www.integrity.qld.gov.au/assets/document/catalogue/icac_info_sheets/Managing_conflicts_of_interest_in_the_public_sector_toolkit.pdf).

Attachment B: Peer Assessor agreement

I _____ (name) _____ agree to abide at all times by the Queensland Public Service Code of Conduct as described in the '*Expectations of Peer Assessors*' section of the Arts Queensland Peer Assessor Handbook in my performance of the tasks associated with membership of the Peer Assessment Panel.

I will:

- ensure I am familiar with my panel's funding program guidelines and criteria
- apply my expertise and professional skills in making and recording transparent, evidence-based judgements about each application, with reference to the funding relevant guidelines and criteria
- conduct my assessments fairly and without bias
- be respectful and constructive in my participation in panel meetings and submit assessments by the agreed deadlines
- declare any actual, potential, or perceived conflicts of interest to Arts Queensland as soon as I am aware of them
- attend induction, moderation and training meetings as required by Arts Queensland
- avoid situations in which my private interests, whether pecuniary or otherwise, might reasonably be thought to conflict with my public duty
- always maintain confidentiality, and not use or share information obtained from applications nor the content of any assessment or moderations
- not discuss applications with applicants nor make public or media comments related to Arts Queensland funding programs, unless approved beforehand by Arts Queensland
- comply with parts 1 and 3 of Chapter 2 of the Information Privacy Act as if I were Arts Queensland
- keep confidential any information provided to me by Arts Queensland in connection with funding applications
- abide by Arts Queensland's Cultural Engagement Framework
- enter into a deed with Arts Queensland upon Arts Queensland's request about privacy and confidentiality and compliance with the Queensland Public Service Code of Conduct and Arts Queensland's Cultural Engagement Framework
- declare any conduct I am currently engaged in that may directly or indirectly bring the Queensland Government, or the Peer Assessor Panel, into disrepute
- notify Arts Queensland in writing of any future conduct I engage in which may directly or indirectly bring the Queensland Government, or the Peer Assessor Panel, into disrepute for the duration of this agreement.

I understand that:

- Arts Queensland funding applicants and others may have legal rights to access documents and written comments prepared by me in carrying out my duties as a peer assessor under the *Right to Information Act 2009*
- my de-identified written and moderation feedback on applications may be provided to applicants and government stakeholders
- my appointment is valid for up to two years from the date of this agreement
- Without limiting any other rights Arts Queensland may have, Arts Queensland may terminate, in its absolute discretion, this agreement for continued failure to complete my duties or for breaches of the Queensland Public Service Code of Conduct
- Arts Queensland may, upon receipt of written notice of any conduct that brings, or may bring, the Queensland Government, or the Peer Assessor Panel, into disrepute, and without limiting any other rights Arts Queensland may have, terminate in its absolute discretion this agreement by written notice.

I am (check box):

- ☐ eligible for remuneration
- ☐ not eligible for remuneration for my services as a peer assessor as outlined in the Peer Assessor Handbook.

I consent to:

- the publication of my name as part of the Peer Assessors Register published on the Arts Queensland and Open Data website
- disclosure of my personal information within Arts Queensland for administrative purposes.

I, the undersigned, declare that:

- I acknowledge that I have read and understood the terms of my engagement as an Arts Queensland peer assessor as outlined in the [Peer Assessor Handbook](#) and this agreement
- I agree to the terms of the above Agreement.

Signed _____