Folk artists are angered by sudden funding cut

By ROBERT MACKLIN,
Arts Editor

AUSTRALIAN folk artists are up in arms.

The director of the Australian Folk Trust, Graham McDonald, said yesterday the Australia Council had cut funding to the trust with only the barest explanation.

"The office is facing closure later this year," he said. The only reason for the cut given by the council was that "support of traditional cultural and arts activities is not a priority of the Performing Arts Board."

Mr McDonald said a nationally funded folk-arts organisation is a vital component of the cultural infrastructure in most countries, "but not to date in Australia".

He said, "For the Federal Government to ignore the only national body concerned with traditional culture is a source of national shame.

"Despite repeated letters, phone calls and personal approaches, no response has been had from either Arts Minister Michael Lee's office or the Cultural Development office. The most that has been heard is a suggestion that to wait for the Cultural Policy Statement, now put back to October 18."

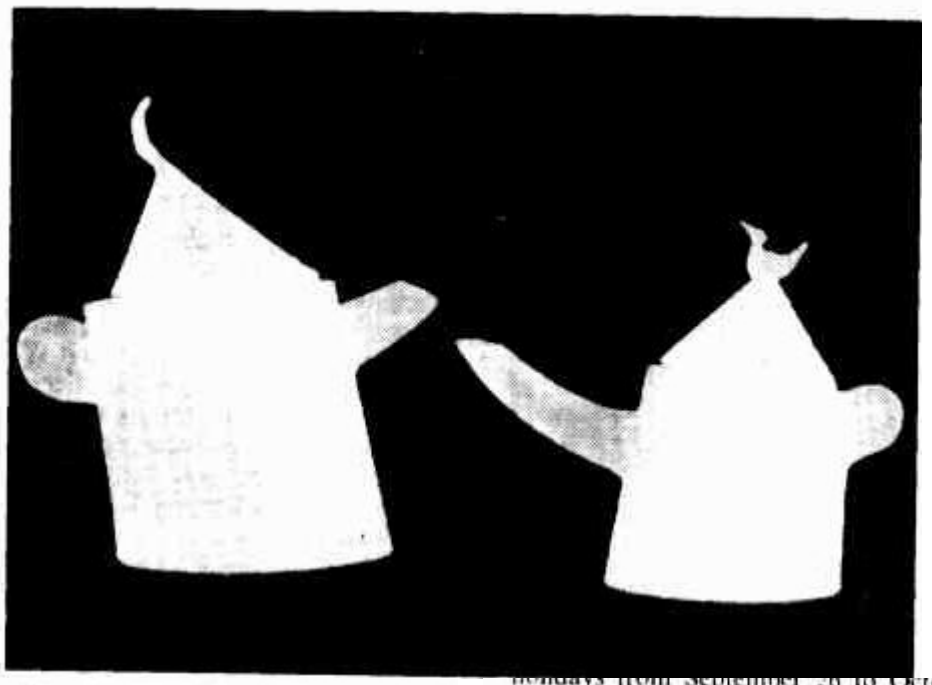
He said the trust is effectively "on hold" and faces shutting down and staff retrenchments before Christmas.

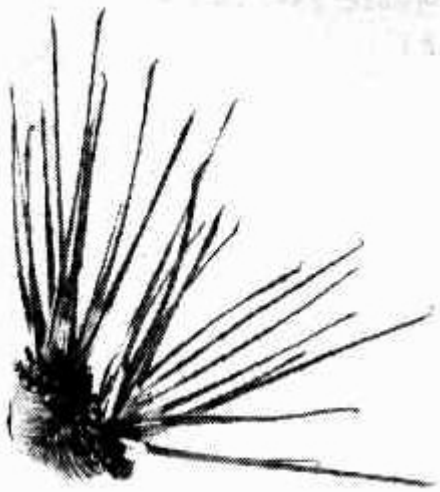
■ It's only a couple of hours to Wagga and well worth the trip for glass-lovers this month for *The Cutting Edge*, the 1994 Glass Triennial.

The triennial is the major event of the Wagga Wagga City Art Gallery and on this occasion Australia's finest glass artists have been gathered within the exhibition, including Gerry King, Judi Elliot, Stephen Skillitzi and Nick Mount.

The catalogue produced by the gallery is itself a work of art — the photographs of many of the works are exciting. *The Bird and The Hand* by Emma Camden and *Blue Urchin* by Richard Clements are quite stunning, but so too are many others.

I wonder if it is possible for a Canberra gallery to tour them here. If a





Emma Camden's *The Bird and the Hand*, top, and Richard Clement's *Blue Urchin*, above, at Wagga

gallery is interested I would be delighted to pass on the catalogue.

■ Still on Wagga, the Splinters theatre group has just returned from a successful season there (and in Sydney) and received favourable reviews. Naturally.

■ Time to book for the return season of *Almost a Dinosaur* at the Canberra Theatre opening during the school holidays from September 26 to October 1. All tickets to opening day performances are half price — only $4.

■ Documentary filmmaker Don Featherstone is planning a 55-minute production on writer Blanche D'Alpuget, supported by the Film Finance Corporation. I suspect this is part of his *Creative Spirits* series for screening on the ABC. As it happened, I was asked to contribute to an episode in the same series, the one on David Williamson. Interesting exercise.

■ Tim Bonyhady, senior research fellow at the ANU's Urban Research Program, is delivering the annual Canberra School of Art lecture this Friday at 6pm at the school. The topic: *Artists with Axes. The impact of artists on the environment.*

■ For those who were looking forward to hearing David Pereira play within the Kakadu Trio recently, only to be disappointed when another member of the ensemble fell ill, restitution is at hand. The cello maestro joins Katie Zhukov on the piano this Sunday for performances of Schubert, Chopin, Dvorak and Brahms — 3pm at St Edmund's College.



Cathy Mann and puppet Rosi in the stage production *Almost a Dinosaur*

■ In response to the inquiries concerning last Saturday's story of the influential Chinese-Australian, William Liu, whose life is commemorated in art in the High Court foyer gallery, a reproduction of the artwork in book form is available at the building's cafeteria.

Prime Minister Paul Keating has delivered a tribute to Mr Liu: "The contribution that Chinese-Australians such as the humanist and business leader William Liu have made to Australian society has been a foundation for the valuable role that Chinese-Australians are playing at present, and will continue to play in the future.

"Most people are familiar with Chinese art and with the delicacy of touch and skills of calligraphy that make them so distinctive. Examples of such works adorn many homes throughout the country. I am sure that the scrolls will serve as important reminders that we need to retain and build on the history and wisdom of people such as William Liu, as we move toward the future as a true multicultural society."