



National Advocates for Arts Education

NAAE Statement

22 December 2021

A more creative approach needed if Australian research is to assist our national COVID recovery

The National Advocates for Arts Education (NAAE) have raised serious questions about the recent announcement by Acting Minister for Education and Youth, the Hon Stuart Robert MP, regarding changes to the Australian Research Council (ARC) and directions for Australian research. The NAAE has grave concerns about the proposed changes, and believes they will not realise the government's stated intention of 'realising Australia's economic recovery from the pandemic' and 'to better leverage Australia's world-class university research sector to support Australia's economy and society'.

The aspirations were identified in [a letter](#) from the Acting Minister to the ARC and affirmed through a media release from the [Minister](#).

In the Acting Minister's letter to the Australian Research Council there are a number of significant changes proposed, regarding national priorities, industry involvement, focus on commercialisation metrics, and a new committee to advise the CEO. While initially some of these proposals may appear reasonable to those outside of university and research fields, they flag an increased level of government interference into independent peer-review processes, and major implications for the type of research that will occur in years to come.

One significant request is that 70% of all industry focused linkage grants are proposed to target the area of manufacturing, not the broad range of industry sectors which contribute to the Australian economy and society. A national research focus on [manufacturing](#) (not even industry more broadly) further sounds a death knell for much of the research that has been occurring in arts, humanities and social sciences. Education, the arts and humanities have never fared all that well with ARC funding, given the current [national Science and Research Priorities](#) which have none that focus on these areas.

However over the past decade there have been a number of significant arts and education projects that have been funded and supported by industry under the ARC Linkage programs including some of the following in 2020:

- **Ambitious and Fair: Strategies for a sustainable visual arts sector.** This project aims to strengthen the visual art industry's economic ecosystem (Royal Melbourne Institute of Technology (RMIT), National Association for the Visual Arts (NAVA), Australian Museums and Galleries Association (AMaGA))
- **Precarious Movements: Choreography and the Museum** (University of New South Wales (UNSW), Art Gallery of New South Wales (AGNSW), TATE UK, National Gallery of Victoria (NGV), and Monash University Museum of Art (MUMA))
- **Sparkling Imagination Education: Transforming inequality in schools.** This project will produce an Imagination Education Pedagogical Framework for use by teachers in schools. (University of Sydney, AIME mentoring, Social Ventures Australia)
- **Visualising Humanitarian Crises: Transforming Images and Aid Policy** (University of Queensland (UQ), World Press Photo Foundation, Red Cross, Médecins Sans Frontières)
- **To map and enhance Australian musical improvisation as a creative industry.** (Western Sydney University, Australian Music Centre, Earshift Music)
- **Creative industries pathways to youth employment in the COVID-19 recession** (Royal Melbourne Institute of Technology (RMIT), Australia Council for the Arts, Australian Theatre for Young People (ATYP), The Push, Future Foundations, Centre for Multicultural Youth)
- **Rebooting the Muse: Post-COVID-19 sustainability in the performing arts.** Rebooting the Muse advocates new ways of tackling the urgent challenges facing the Australian performing arts in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic and climate change emergency. (University of Adelaide, (Adelaide Symphony Orchestra; State Theatre Company of South Australia; Patch Theatre, Light Cultural Foundation, Illuminate Adelaide)

According to the Minister's request, the total pool for linkage funding beyond manufacturing will be severely restricted, so this will make it extremely difficult for new arts and education research to be funded.

This new direction pays little heed to how Australia's world-class university research sector might support Australia's 'society' given the impact of COVID 19. The past two years has demonstrated that such a crisis has an impact far beyond the science and manufacturing areas, and research needs to be conducted across the range of different disciplines and domains to examine the effects and possibilities for humans, cultures and communities.

The letter from the Minister further outlines proposed changes which include industry, business and end users to be on assessment panels, undermining the independence and credibility of the ARC and its College of Experts. It also assumes that industry knows how to prioritise research, the implication being research takes a direct trajectory from question to industrial impact. It's well established that the biggest gains and impacts of research are often happenstance and identified retrospectively from fundamental research. So-called end-users actually need academic research to be conducted independently as well as in partnership.

The NAAE believes research funding to fuel COVID recovery needs to value the educational, social and cultural dimensions of response and recovery, and that the current government directives that narrow the focus for funded research be abandoned. It is crucial that quality

research across disciplinary realms is supported to help create visions and possibilities, to help promote social inclusion and cohesion, foster critical thinking, imagination and innovation – all aspects that are essential to Australia’s future.

WHO WE ARE

The [National Advocates for Arts Education](#) (NAAE) is a coalition of peak arts and arts education associations who represent arts educators across Australia. NAAE members are: Art Education Australia (AEA), Australian Dance Council – Ausdance, Australian Society for Music Education (ASME), Australian Teachers of Media (ATOM), Drama Australia, and National Association for the Visual Arts (NAVA)

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National Advocates for Arts Education (NAAE) members:

Art Education Australia
Australian Dance Council – Ausdance
Australian Society for Music Education
Australian Teachers of Media
Drama Australia
National Association for the Visual Arts

www.naae.org.au