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NAVA Submission re Inquiry into innovation and creativity: workforce for the new economy

The National Association for the Visual Arts (NAVA) is pleased to provide this submission in response to the Australian Government's Inquiry into 'innovation and creativity: workforce for the new economy'.

NAVA is the national peak body protecting and promoting the professional interests of the Australian visual and media arts, craft and design sector. It provides advocacy and leadership, sets and monitors compliance with best practice standards for the industry and delivers a range of services for its members and the arts community more generally. These services include helping to increase artists' professionalism by offering career development opportunities through a variety of on-line and face-to-face training, professional development resources, small grants programs, expert advice and referrals.

As an industry representative body and a professional development training provider, NAVA has a keen interest in the way in which governments act to determine the environment in which visual arts professionals are educated to optimise their creative skills and effectively contribute their creative ideas and innovative products and services to the community.

NAVA notes that the purpose of the Inquiry is to determine how best Australia's tertiary education system can meet the needs of a future labour force focused on innovation and creativity. Regrettably, NAVA notes that this Inquiry is only concerned with the role of innovation and creativity as an economic contributor. We would point out that an equally important aim is to achieve social and cultural goals for the country. However, as well as these public goods to be gained from the arts, within the parameters of this inquiry it is important to understand that the arts also have flow on economic effects as Richard Florida so well articulates in his seminal work, 'The Rise of the Creative Class'. He provides evidence to demonstrate the growing role of both scientists and artists in stimulating the economy through their creativity.

NAVA contends that the government's current preoccupation with promoting science, technology, engineering and maths (STEM) alone as the wellsprings of creativity and innovation takes too narrow a view. As has been increasingly recognised and embraced around the world, arts and culture should be understood to generate similar benefits. Arts should be integral to the Innovation Agenda either in a stand-alone capacity or added to STEM to become STEAM by including 'A' for Arts.

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Patrons: Pat Corrigan AM, Mrs Janet Holmes à Court AC, Professor David Throsby AO. ACN 003 229 285 / ABN 16 003 229 285

The Education Minister, Simon Birmingham's recent public statement that the arts are a 'lifestyle choice' rather than a profession caused deep concern in the arts industry. NAVA asserts that for professional creators, working in the arts is a career not a lifestyle choice.

This submission will attempt to make the case for why the Government should pay much more serious attention to the role that creative arts training plays in preparing students for a very rapidly and radically changing work environment. Here they learn the skills of creativity, agility, intellectual curiosity, resourcefulness, entrepreneurship and the courage to take risks; qualities which are increasingly necessary for the 21st century working environment and valued by employers, commissioners and partners.

Recommendations

1. Policy

To boost the creativity and innovation of the workforce, the Government should:

- include the arts in its STEM initiatives to capitalise on the parallel and equal creative and innovation value that is delivered by people who are arts trained
- develop an evidence based arts policy which has synchronicity with its education policies

2. Schools

The Government should see school education as providing the groundwork for later learning and enable the effective delivery of the national arts curriculum in schools through:

- ensuring that equal emphasis is placed on arts learning to other forms of literacy
- ensuring adequate pre-service training of primary teachers in the arts
- funding the development and provision of teaching resources to enable teachers to effectively deliver the arts curriculum
- supporting an 'artists in schools' program around the country

3. Tertiary Education – University & VET sector

The government should boost tertiary art education by:

- putting in place a research funding and evaluation system that gives equitable access to funding and recognition for creative arts research
- commissioning a new study of trends in Australian Art and Design Schools to evaluate what needs to change in order to ensure the provision of optimal art and design education in each state and territory, then acting on this study's recommendations

- reinstating visual arts courses as eligible for the VET student loan scheme, recognising the value to the arts industry and the broader work environment of highly trained art graduates
- changing the caps on the fees for these courses to reflect the real costs of studio based teaching.

1. Why Arts

As the Government is keenly aware, countries that are able to position their workforce as highly creative and innovative will be better placed to attract capital investment, business partnerships and country-to-country co-operation and collaboration. The Government understands that it must embrace and invest in the kinds of training that produces workers with these skills. As is being increasingly asserted both by academics and by industry, it is not only in the areas of science and technology that these skills are evident, but equally in cultural enterprises. The recent government commitment to STEM needs to be expanded to include the arts.

2. Artists in Business

In the Government assessing how it should invest in supporting arts education and training, there has been a lack of understanding about the nature of the visual arts industry and an underestimate of its contribution to the economy. Graduate employment surveys miss the fact that most artists are self-employed operating their own micro businesses. They operate within an interdependent web of businesses and services: art materials manufacturers, importers, wholesalers and retailers, stationers, framers, printers, freight companies, graphic and web-designers, photographers, together with commissioners, agents and dealers. They deal with state and local governments, architects, designers and galleries of all sizes (from state museums and regional to artist run initiatives), auction houses and collectors. They also work with organizers of public events and make a significant contribution to local tourism.

Most visual and media arts, craft and design practitioners are not only involved in the making, exhibiting and marketing art and design works but also offer their services in a multitude of different other industries. As an example, according to the Australian Ceramics Association, the peak national body representing the Studio Ceramics Sector in Australia, there are currently 4,000 people employed directly and indirectly in the industry in roles which include:

- studio ceramicists
- community-based Artists and Teachers
- ceramic Suppliers of clay, glazes and ceramics equipment including kilns, pottery wheels etc
- photographers and web designers
- landscape production in ceramics
- tile production in Ceramics
- aged care and occupational therapy activities

- artist in residence programs both national and international
- public artwork and installation work
- gallery professionals including curatorial,
- ceramics restoration
- 3D printing products -technological, material and product innovation
- specialist teaching and workshop offerings
- architectural component design

Increasingly, artists have portfolio careers. Not only do creative arts graduates apply their training to their art practice but Australian artists are 'multi-talented' and engage in a number of creative occupations outside the area of their principal creative practice throughout their career.¹ On average they spend about half of their time on their creative practice, and the rest of their time on both arts related and non-arts work.²

Just over one third of artists have at some time used their creative skills in industries outside the arts and most have done so on a paid basis. Of these, over four in ten have applied their skills in government, social and personal services, while around a third have applied them to the wider cultural and related industries and one in ten have applied their skills to the non-cultural industries.

The specific occupations that artists apply their artistic skills to vary based on their creative practice. Of those artists who have applied their creative skills in industries outside the arts:

- 41 percent of writers have worked as copywriters, editors, journalists
- 41 percent of visual artists and 39 percent of craft practitioners have worked as designers, drawers, illustrators
- 31 percent of dancers have worked as fitness instructors
- 30 percent of actors have worked as a corporate trainer/actor.³

3. Future Work Predictions

Informed predictions about the jobs of the future reveal that automation and artificial intelligence are changing the skills needs of the future.

In 2013, The Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) published an extensive review of arts education focusing on the relationship between The Arts and Innovation. The report found that:

"arts graduates are likely to have the complex set of skills that are useful in highly innovative occupations ...(but) innovation usually tends to focus on skills in science and engineering."

¹ Throsby D and Zednik A, 2010, 'Do you really expect to get paid? An economic study of professional artists in Australia'

² 'Arts Nation: an Overview of Australian Arts', 2015 Edition, Australia Council

³ Throsby op cit

As the Inquiry Committee may be aware, the 2015 Report of the Committee for Economic Development of Australia (CEDA)⁴ about the jobs of the future reveals how our skills needs are changing. It predicts that almost 40 per cent of Australian jobs will become redundant in 10 to 15 years. It singled out jobs that involved "low levels of social interaction, low levels of creativity, or low levels of mobility and dexterity" as most likely to be replaced by automation. It indicated that the trend was towards highly skilled, agile, self-employed people who were capable in the areas of "architecting, designing and analysing", being those who would form a substantial proportion of the workforce of the future.

NAVA asserts that these are the very skills in which creative arts trained graduates are pre-eminent. An arts training helps students to develop the kinds of entrepreneurial, innovative and exploratory thinking skills and communication capacity that are predicted as increasingly essential for the 21st century work environment.

To meet the changing demands of the 21st Century Australian economy and achieve high levels of creativity and innovation capacity, NAVA proposes that the integration of arts training across other areas of university learning would introduce new arts methods and processes which could expand the capacity of all students to imagine, explore, represent and effectively communicate new ideas. This will be elaborated below.

4. Arts' Economic Contribution

Still not well understood in Australia is the valuable current contribution made by the arts industry to the Australia economy. Cultural activity is estimated to make up around 4% of Australia's GDP⁵ and 1.3% of government expenditure.⁶ Statistics released by the Australia Council in 2015⁷ demonstrate that in 2008–09, Australian cultural industries generated over \$50 billion in economic activity, or \$35 billion in Gross Value Added (GVA). This was higher than the GVA for agriculture, forestry and fishing (\$29 billion); electricity, gas, water and waste services (\$27 billion); and accommodation and food services (\$28 billion). The arts employs more people than agriculture, mining and construction and has been growing by around 2.6 percent annually since 1996, which is faster than the growth in employment overall of 1.9 percent.⁸

⁴ Australia's Future Workforce? June 2015, Committee for Economic Development of Australia

⁵ ABS 2014, Australian National Accounts: Cultural and Creative Activity Satellite Accounts, Experimental, 2008–09 (cat. no. 5271.0), 10 February

⁶ Based on ABS 2014, Cultural Funding by Government, Australia, 2012–13, (cat. no. 4183.0), 30 May.

Based on ABS 2014, Government Finance Statistics, Australia, 2012–13, (cat. no. 5512.0), 28 May.

⁷ <http://www.australiacouncil.gov.au/workspace/uploads/files/arts-nation-october-2015->

⁸ Cunningham and Higgs, 'What the 2011 Census tells us about Arts Employment'

In another set of figures from the Australian Bureau of Statistics⁹:

- Cultural and creative activity is estimated to have contributed \$86.0 billion (6.9%) to Australia's Gross Domestic Product (GDP) on a national accounts basis in 2008-09.
- Volunteer services to arts and heritage organisations are estimated to have contributed \$756 million to GDP on a satellite accounts basis in 2008-09.
- It is estimated there was an average of 972,200 people during 2008-09 whose main employment was in a cultural or creative industry or occupation

In addition, Australia's copyright industries have arts and cultural activity at their core. They generate over \$93 billion in economic activity (6.6% of GDP) and employ 8% of the nation's workforce.¹⁰

A conservative estimate by the Australia Council was that in performing arts, music recording, publishing and arts education alone there were around 40,800 cultural organisations in 2008–09 that employed one or more persons, and that at least 11 percent of these were in core arts industries. If taken across the whole arts sector, the figure would be much higher¹¹. A further 57,800 individuals were registered as a cultural business, with over a quarter of these being in core arts industries.

A conservative estimate of the economic contribution of the arts is that the performing arts, music recording and publishing, and arts education together contribute \$4.2 billion (0.3% of GDP).¹² This does not include the value of volunteer services, which are estimated to be worth an additional \$0.8 billion across arts and heritage organisations.

With around 11 million visitors a year, galleries are now more highly attended than Australia's most popular spectator sport, Australian Rules Football, which had 10 million attendances in 2009-10. Nearly all Australians attended live events, visited art galleries or read literature in 2013 (94%)¹³.

Despite all the evidence, surprisingly, our governments still seem preoccupied with a narrow concept of creativity and innovation which only recognises STEM as having the potential to rise to the needs of the future. Whilst these are undoubtedly critically important fields of endeavour for Australia and the world, equally valuable are the creative arts where imagination and thinking outside the current orthodoxies and paradigms is a foundational imperative. The Australian Government's 'Securing Australia's Future' report missed the opportunity by focusing exclusively on science and technology innovation ignoring the fact that innovation resides in other fields. Especially problematic was the absence of any consideration of the arts.

⁹ 4 5271.0 - Australian National Accounts: Cultural and Creative Activity Satellite Accounts, Experimental, 2008-09

¹⁰ PWC 2012, The Economic Contribution of Australia's Copyright Industries 1996–97 to 2010–11, Report prepared for the Australian Copyright Council, 15 August.

¹¹ Australia Council op cit

¹² Ibid

¹³ ABS 2010, 'Attendance at selected cultural venues and events 2009-10' (CATI 4114.0)

5. Australia's Innovation Performance

The Global Innovation index (GII)¹⁴ 2016 finds that innovation is important for driving economic progress and competitiveness but is also more general and horizontal in nature, and includes social innovations and business model innovations as well as technical ones. Recognizing and celebrating innovation is seen as critical for inspiring people, especially the next generation of entrepreneurs and innovators.

GII 2016 reveals that Australia is ranked 19th out of 128 countries. However, though amongst the leaders, Australia is classified as an 'inefficient innovator'. The Innovation Efficiency Ratio assesses the effectiveness of innovation systems and policies. Australia is in 11th position in regards to inputs (human capital and research, business and market sophistication, infrastructure and institutions), but is ranked 27th in output (knowledge, technology and creativity).

A critical element is sustained investment in R & D and *"a diversified talent pool that brings in fresh perspectives and skills; an environment that encourages risk-taking; and experimenting with novel partnership models and innovation platforms."*

GII raises the important principle of countries aiming beyond competitive national priorities to achieve global innovation co-operation where all stakeholders stand to gain, with policy makers, academics, and industrialists working together to solve global challenges.

"GII has demonstrated that the innovation capacity of any nation is measured not only by what it does locally, but also by how it impacts the entire globe. Issues such as poverty, health, urbanization, access to water, and climate change are of a global nature but, at the same time, both the challenges and their solutions have local consequences."

The Innovation Output Sub-Index variables provide information on elements that are the result of innovation within an economy and the disparity in Australia's rankings indicate that we are not benefitting to extent we would expect.

As a recent Deloitte Report¹⁵ concluded, *"the Australian economy of the future will not just require workers with the traditional 'higher skills'; rather we will require a workforce of creative, innovative and highly adaptable knowledge workers"*.

¹⁴ The Global Innovation Index 2016, Winning with Global Innovation.
Editors: Soumitra Dutta, Bruno Lanvin, and Sacha Wunsch-Vincent Editors
Co-published by Cornell University, INSEAD, and the World Intellectual Property Organization (WIPO)

6. UK Models

The following offer models and initiatives that Australia should learn from.

6.1 Knowledge Transfer Partnerships (KTPs) aims to help businesses improve their productivity and competitiveness through the better use of technology, knowledge, and skills. Each KTP is a three-way partnership between a business, an academic institution, and a graduate. The academic institution receives a grant to partially subsidize the cost of employing a recently qualified graduate to work at the company; the average company contribution to KTP projects is around £20,000. This program would seem an admirable one to emulate in Australia. The nearest equivalent in Australia is a small program called 'Innovation Connections' that provides financial support to place a publicly funded researcher in a business or a business researcher in a publicly funded research organisation to work collaboratively on a specified project. This program would seem an obvious one to grow.

6.2 NESTA, (National Endowment for Science, Technology and the Arts) is an inspirational model which works to increase the innovation capacity of the UK. The organisation acts through a combination of practical programmes, investment, policy and research, and the formation of partnerships to promote innovation across a broad range of sectors. Its work is in the following areas:

- i) Economic Growth - publishing regular research papers on how innovation can boost economic growth
- ii) Investment - through a £25 million impact investment fund which supports social ventures with innovative products or services that address the challenges of: an ageing population; the employability of young people; and the sustainability of UK communities
- iii) Public Services – offering practical programs to find innovative ways of delivering cheaper, more efficient public services, and demonstrating how these can be scaled up across the UK. Recent examples include: the Innovation in Giving fund, in partnership with the Cabinet Office, which seeks to find and support new platforms for the giving of time, skills and money; an education program, looking at how children can be taught to become digital makers, and how the education system can benefit from digital technology. In the past they ran The Big Green Challenge, a £1 million prize fund to stimulate community action on climate change
- iv) Creative Industries - specialising in original research and running practical programs to help the sector eg the Digital R&D Fund, in partnership with Arts Council and the Arts and Humanities Research, and also the Creative Business Mentoring Network, which pairs mentees from creative companies with experienced business leaders.

6.3 Creative Industries Federation UK

This relatively new organisation has undertaken some revealing research. In its 'Social Mobility and the Skills Gap Creative Education Agenda 2016' Report it says the following:

“The creative industries are one of Britain’s biggest success stories, worth £87.4bn in GVA. The creative economy (which includes those in creative jobs outside the sector) employs one in every 11 working people. It has been the fastest growing sector of the economy since the 2008 financial crash. It has highly attractive jobs and ones that are also at low risk of being replaced by robots in the future. In her keynote speech at the Conservative Party Conference, Prime Minister Theresa May named the creative industries as a key strategic sector for the economy at large.”

7. Instrumental Role of Arts

In the Government assessing how much it should invest in supporting arts education and training, there may be a lack of understanding about the nature of the visual arts industry and an underestimation of its contribution to the economy. Graduate employment surveys miss the fact that most artists are self-employed running their own micro businesses. They operate within an interdependent web of businesses and services: art materials manufacturers, importers, wholesalers and retailers, stationers, framers, printers, freight companies, graphic and web-designers, photographers, together with commissioners, agents and dealers. They also deal with state and local governments, architects, designers and galleries of all sizes (from state museums and regional to artist run initiatives), auction houses and collectors. They also work with organizers of public events and make a significant contribution to local tourism.

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- ceramics restoration
- 3D printing products -Technological, material and product innovation
- specialist teaching and workshop offerings
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8. STEM to STEAM

Steam is building for the alignment of STEM with the arts to develop into STEAM. Arts Minister Mitch Fifield, speaking at the National Visual Art Education conference a year ago advocated for supporting a creative education and innovation agenda, stating that:

“If we want to have a real culture of innovation then we need to have creativity at the heart of (the STEM) agenda and what we need to do is to put an A into STEM. We need to start talking about STEAM. Science, Technology, Education, the Arts and Mathematics. Because if we want to have a culture of innovation, a culture of creativity feeds directly into that.”

The Australian Council of Learned Academies (ACOLA) report released in 2016 warns:¹⁶

Innovation is not just based on research, science or technology, or even on entrepreneurial skills. Managerial and marketing skills, organisational, social, economic and administrative knowledge, and intellectual and creative capacity are also required to successfully translate new opportunities, ideas and discoveries into innovation.

The report studies how capabilities based on STEM and HASS (humanities, arts and social sciences) interact in high performing Australian enterprises in the context of the innovation challenges.

The report concludes:

- *Australia’s focus on science and technology skill inputs is not sufficient to address Australia’s shortcomings in innovation*
- *Success in an Australian context has been found in organisations, both profit and not-for-profit, that employ a mixed skills set*
- *Future teams tackling innovation challenges should adopt a holistic approach to innovation.*

Paul McCombie, Admissions Tutor for Civil Engineering and Deputy Head of Department, Department of Architecture and Civil Engineering, University of Bath reports that:

“An education including creative subjects can produce better qualified graduates even in STEM subjects: in a study covering 200 civil engineering graduates at the University of Bath, it emerged that having studied art and design or music offered a 1.74% advantage to the class average, whilst design and technology offered a 2.21% advantage. In contrast, having studied only maths and sciences gave a 1.43% disadvantage and further maths offered a 1.9% disadvantage. The STEM subjects the students studied were obviously important, but it is a reminder that creative subjects can be a valuable part of training, too, and improve achievement at HEFE level24.”

¹⁶ ‘Skills and capabilities for Australian enterprise innovation’, ACOLA June 2016, p4

A strong advocate for multi-disciplinary education is Commonwealth Bank of Australia CEO Ian Narev. In January 2017 he told the *Wired for Wonder* event in Sydney that it was absolutely critical for all Australians to invest in building an Australian education boom. He said both arts and science skills are the critical skills that Australia needs to harness and build into the skill sets of the next generation. He warned against privileging technology at the expense of human-centred strengths, like creativity and imagination as true drivers of innovation.

"Because actually as an employer and as a member of the community, the skill we most need to foster is creativity."

Narev described himself as "absolutely an advocate" of the expansion of S.T.E.M to S.T.E.A.M.

"The A is for Arts.... We're going to need more creativity to underpin innovation in our companies and our communities. We need to make sure we are developing not only outstanding coders but outstanding creative minds as well."

ArtsEdge, a visionary 'arts in education' partnership between the WA Department of Culture and the Arts and the Department of Education has offered STEAM learning opportunities and generated valuable resources. This is the future.

9. School Education

Though this Inquiry is focused on tertiary education, the groundwork needs to be established at school for there to be continuity into higher levels of learning.

Arts Minister Mitch Fifield, speaking at the National Visual Art Education conference in 2016 said, *"The arts is not some luxury. It's not an add on. It's not something that's extra-curricular in an educational sense. The arts is something that should be core to primary and secondary school education."*

The US, Canada, UK, Europe and Australia have all produced studies which make evident the value that students derive from arts training, not only in developing the kinds of skills that deliver innovation, but also in achieving better grades in other subject areas, and gaining greater value and enjoyment from their school learning experience.

The importance of inclusion of the arts in the curriculum is reinforced by Australian studies including one which examined the role of arts participation in students' academic and non-academic outcomes.¹⁷ This study identified significant school-, home-, and community based arts participation factors predicting positive academic (e.g., motivation and engagement) and non-academic (e.g., self-esteem, life satisfaction) outcomes.

¹⁷ 17 The role of arts participation in students' academic and non-academic outcomes: A longitudinal study of school, home, and community factors. Martin, Andrew J.; Mansour, Marianne; Anderson, Michael; Gibson, Robyn; Liem, Gregory A. D.; Sudmalis, David,

Over many years, the Australian arts sector has worked hard to ensure that arts education has been included in the national curriculum. The National Advocates for Arts Education (of which NAVA is a member) has assisted ACARA to formulate a curriculum which models how all five artforms (dance, drama, media arts, music and visual arts) are to be taught to year 10.

Prior to this, research was undertaken in both music and the visual arts to make the case for inclusion of the arts in the school curriculum. NAVA was responsible for persuading the Government to invest in the research report: 'First We See: The National Review of Visual Education' published in 2008. That same year, the Melbourne Declaration on Educational Goals for Young Australians was agreed to by all Australian education ministers. It committed to supporting "all young Australians to become successful learners, confident and creative individuals, and active and informed citizens". This document provided the scope for the development of the Australian Curriculum. The five arts subjects in the Australian Curriculum are intended to provide opportunities for students to learn how to create, design, represent, communicate and share their imagined and conceptual ideas, emotions, observations and experiences.

However, to achieve optimal outcomes, there are still issues awaiting effective address. The amount of time devoted to pre-service training of teachers to deliver the arts curriculum is completely inadequate. It varies but on average only 17 hours is devoted to this preparation.

This makes it even more crucial for there to be good resources to assist teachers with content, ideas and methods of teaching. However, these are still lacking.

The arts institutions play an important role in supplementing school arts education. Many galleries offer a plethora of opportunities for school children to engage with the art on exhibition, hear expert opinion, meet the artists themselves and buy resources.

Having an artist in residence at school is one of the most potent ways of inspiring children by example and allowing them to have close engagement with the creative process. The loss of support for the Australia Council's artists in school residencies program was one of the casualties of the Government's recent arts funding cuts. This should be restored.

10. Tertiary education

10.1 Arts Status Within Universities

Since the Dawkins reforms of the 1990s¹⁸ saw art schools absorbed into the universities, they have faced the challenge of being a square peg in a round hole, not sitting comfortably within a text based culture. Even after so many years of 'integration', universities have trouble recognising visual language and acknowledging art practice as research.

The value of the presence of art schools in universities is that in some universities not only the art students, but students across all the other faculties can opt to take art school units which broaden their intellectual horizons and enable them to more effectively face the challenges posed by automation and artificial intelligence.

In her recent study¹⁹ Jenny Wilson from the University of Melbourne has looked at the problems faced by the arts in gaining recognition and equity of treatment by universities. She demonstrates that "every public university in Australia now has some form of creative arts program creating a campus-based interconnected schema of artistic outposts across the country. Universities have become hubs that connect artists with each other, and with their audiences....The arts provides an important way for the universities to connect with communities. Universities provide mechanisms to connect communities with their heritage, histories and their sub-cultures, to improve community cohesion and to address particular challenges....The Regional Universities Network (RUN) confirms the 'powerful role' of university-based arts 'in building inclusive and resilient communities, increasing awareness and understanding of key societal issues' (RUN, 2013 p. 31). "

Wilson also points out that, "The university is open to more experimental work than may be possible in a more commercially-oriented setting. This risk taking through research and development is where innovation is nourished."

She quotes an interview with Deputy Vice- Chancellors for Research (DVCR) :
"As things become more and more automated, the creative input is going to become even more important for human capital" (DVCR1)"

¹⁸ Dawkins, J. S. (1988). Higher Education: A Policy Statement. Commonwealth Government. Canberra.

¹⁹ Wilson, J. (2011). Creative Arts Research: A long path to acceptance. Australian Universities Review, 53(2), 68-76.

The hidden topography of Australia's arts nation: The contribution of universities to the artistic landscape (AUR 58 01)

Usefully, Wilson makes evident the problems faced by art schools within the universities.

“Universities replicate government reward and recognition criteria in their internal policies, practices, funding and thinking. In government higher education and research policy, the visual and performing arts are largely ignored. The criteria used to calculate university research block funding are largely focused on text-based scholarly publications and particular categories of research funding for which artistic research is either ineligible or exhibits low success rates. Visual and performing arts practitioners are the only disciplinary group to be unrepresented by a government funded scholarly academy. Neither does artistic work contribute to university ranking performance. As universities increasingly apply promotion and funding criteria more suited to the science lab than the art studio, support for artists to continue their practice can be squeezed out, along with the space, time and infrastructure that is afforded to students, Australia’s future artistic leaders.”

She quotes from another DVCR *‘We have been told that [funding] to the humanities will be redirected to medical problems like diabetes and dementia. Frankly, I think this is appalling because for a civilised society we should have a vibrant arts culture’* (DVCR2).

10.2 Pressure on Art Schools

The situation of university based art schools has become very problematic and led to consideration by some art schools about seceding from the university system. What has resulted from 30 years of change to the structure and circumstances of tertiary art and design schools is the pressure to do more with less. It has seen a serious decline in what is now being offered to students.

In his important study, ‘Attitudes and Trends in Australian Art and Design Schools’, the then Head, of the Tasmanian School of Art, Professor Noel Frankham undertook a survey which provided information about the contractions resulting from sustained and profound change since the art schools were moved into the higher education system, a move instigated by John Dawkins as federal education minister. A study of this kind needs to be done again to reveal trends and changes in circumstances since.

Frankham’s survey revealed that amongst the 12 art schools that responded, there were losses of studio major offerings from art and design school programs included: ceramics (3), printmaking (3), sculpture (3), drawing (2), multimedia (2), glass, textiles, film, illustration, and leatherwork. Studio majors deemed at risk in Australian art and design schools included: ceramics (4), printmaking (3), textiles (2), multimedia (2), fine art, and furniture design;

And two schools were concerned that the whole school was at risk

Amongst others, issues of serious concern identified included:

- Hostile commonwealth education policies
- Static/declining funding/income
- An outdated funding model
- Increasingly devolved administrative responsibilities and load

- Risk aversion within universities
- Loss of profile for art, craft and design within university structures
- Challenges of meeting research objectives and reporting structures that don't fit the discipline/culture
- Reduced hours available for contact teaching
- Increasing class sizes
- Technology costs/convergent technology
- Competition from TAFE and private providers
- Stratification of art and design schools

Frankham found: "The real terms decline in income for Australian art schools over the past 30 years together with ever-increasing administrative requirements (accountability and quality assurance reporting and planning), salary increases, declining non-salary budgets, increasing student load – but declining demand in some areas, have made it virtually impossible for schools to continue to offer the full suite of studio disciplines."

Over 20 years he found that in his art school there were:

- an increase in student numbers of just over 100%.
- 36% fewer academics;
- 37% fewer technicians, and
- 50% fewer administrators.

Many art schools have adapted to these kinds of changed circumstances by:

- amalgamating with other university departments (eg Department of Art, Architecture and Design, UniSA)
- forging partnerships with TAFEs (Tasmanian College of the Arts, Inveresk campus & Tas TAFE)
- changing their focus to more pragmatic, vocationally oriented content provision (UNSW Art & Design)
- contracting the options they offer (most art schools)
- closing down (University of Western Sydney art school)

Driven by increasing costs and declining income, many art schools are not able to sustain studios as they were originally envisaged, thereby ultimately restricting students' capacity to utilise the full range of media, materials, techniques and processes traditionally associated with art, craft and design practice.

Frankham predicted that there would be fewer discrete 'fine arts' schools and more cross-art-form visual and performing arts, architecture, design and art schools. This is proving to be prescient.

10.3 Sydney art school example

A recent example of universities abnegating their commitment to art education has been the abortive attempt by the University of Sydney to divest itself of its art school, Sydney College of the Arts (SCA) by proposing a merger with the University of NSW

School of Art and Design and the National Art School. Students were to be moved to the UNSWA&D campus with loss of facilities and subject options. The proposition was to create a 'Centre of Excellence', however, it proved unviable. Widespread and vociferous protests saw the University of Sydney back down. However, it is in the process of radically down-sizing SCA.

10.4 Decimation of the TAFE Sector

TAFE arts courses are product and self-employment focused. With a greater focus on skills acquisition, entrepreneurship and small business training, they provide an alternative pathway to the university based art schools. However, the diminution of art education options has been exacerbated by the savaging of the TAFE system and the disastrous moves by governments to privatise the VET system.

Tragically, in the last few years thos has seen the TAFE system severely contracted. The shortfall in TAFE arts training are not taken up by courses in universities whose courses serve a different purpose. They are more theoretical and research-based whereas TAFE courses are more craft-based and grounded in the practicalities of making and marketing the work. Further, not all students want to undertake or are suited to university level studies. However, TAFE art courses have offered a pathway for some into tertiary level courses and thus provided an important alternative entry into study at this level.

To some small extent the private sector has moved in to make up the shortfall but this is inadequate, unregulated and unaffordable for most students.

10.5 VET student loans

For the arts, the contraction in the TAFE system has been exacerbated by the exclusion of many arts courses from eligibility for the VET Student Loan scheme. The arts sector was unanimous in its support for the Government's intention to get rid of the dodgy providers rorting the VET training scheme at the expense of students and the community at large. However, this is seen as a separate issue which should be addressed by the Government through identifying which entities have been guilty of malpractice and closing the loopholes that allow them to act dishonestly.

When the Education Minister announced his intention to exclude some courses from Government loans, the arts industry responded pointing out that this would impact negatively on some good quality and long-standing providers who are delivering reputable valuable training to students who intend to apply their training to their work in the cultural industries and beyond. Despite evidence being provided and appeals by peak arts education and industry bodies, the situation remains and must be remedied.

11. Conclusion

The Government must recognize what is becoming more and more evident in reports from around the world that the arts is a major source of creativity and innovation that can more effectively nourish the Australian economy if given the right encouragement and support.