

**The Council for the Humanities, Arts and Social Sciences**  
**President's Report**  
**Professor Stuart Cunningham**  
**October 2007**

In the reporting period, the financial year 2006-07, CHASS has moved beyond the initial stages of establishing itself as a peak Council representing the interests of people working in the humanities, arts and social sciences.

CHASS is now widely recognised as providing a policy voice for our sector. This complements our work in building and enhancing networks for people in research, education and practice in the humanities, arts and social sciences. CHASS works collaboratively with other influential groups such as the Academy of the Humanities, the Academy of the Social Sciences in Australia, universities, peak councils in the creative arts, and tertiary sector organizations such as the DASSH Deans.

The highlights of this last year include:

- The HOTH event, the third in a series which brings people working in research and education in the humanities, arts and social sciences to Canberra, for individual meetings with members of Parliament
- Convening workshops in Melbourne and Brisbane, to allow a discussion on the RQF by the visual and performing arts, architecture and design
- Commissioning and launching a report on collaborations between the HASS and STEM (science-technology-engineering-medicine) sectors
- Helping persuade the Productivity Commission to revise its views on the value of the HASS sector, through submissions to a major inquiry into the public investment in science and innovation
- Convening a two-day symposium at UTS for the Directors of university-based centres of research and education.
- Two dinners for Members of Parliament and their staffers, to discuss the issues of Australia's Asian edge: the view from Europe; and the "Pathways to Prevention" project
- A public event to explore the role of culture, featuring speakers John Holden, Head of Culture at Demos in London, and Stuart Cunningham, Director of the ARC Centre of Excellence for Creative Industries and Innovation at QUT
- Our AGM managed the successful transition from the inaugural President, approved the audited reports and elected a new President and Board
- Increasing the number of subscribers to our newsletter to over 1,100
- Providing advice to DEST on the potential value of metrics in assessing Political Science and History
- Running Board meetings in Sydney, Brisbane and Canberra, each featuring a discussion with other national groups to canvas matters of mutual interest
- Making submissions on the ARC's Federation Fellows program, and to a review of the Higher Education Support Act
- Promoting Greg Craven as speaker at the National Press Club
- Employing new staff to increase the capacity of CHASS for research projects and to organise events
- Maintaining our membership base after the implementation of a new subscription system

In terms of the specific activities, I would report as follows:

### **A. Consolidation of the establishment of CHASS**

(i) In the reporting period, a regular meeting schedule was maintained for both the Executive (11 meetings) and the Board (four meetings). CHASS has maintained a pattern of circulating between the major cities of Australia for its Board meetings, and on each occasion has taken advantage of the location to hold dinner meetings with our constituency.

In Brisbane the Board met with the President and Executive Director of the Academy of Humanities; the President of the Deans of Arts, Social Sciences and Humanities; and the Past-President of the Australian Vice-Chancellors' Committee, to discuss matters of common interest.

In Sydney the Board met with the President and Board of the Collections Council. The Collections Council of Australia Ltd is the peak body for the Australian collections sector. It has been established to ensure the nation-wide sustainability of collections by consulting with key stakeholders to resolve common issues and to promote the value of the sector, and has a clear overlap of interests with CHASS.

In Canberra the CHASS Board met with three of the newly-appointed chairs of RQF Panels and senior representatives of the Australian Research Council.

(ii) CHASS held a successful AGM, reporting on its activities, presenting the auditor's report and electing a new Board.

(iii) In terms of membership, CHASS has continued to expand. We have successfully transferred our Membership to a new subscription program which introduces a substantial annual fee. As expected, some closely-related Members consolidated into a single membership; and nine Members decided to leave the organisation, but we have retained the majority of our original Membership and generated a significant new income stream.

(iv) CHASS has made a number of new staff appointments: a Membership Liaison Officer and a Director, Research. This has increased our capacity to stage events, make submissions, and liaise with our Members on policy issues. CHASS maintains its policy of a judicious blend of direct employment of staff, with the hiring in of consultants on a needs basis (for instance, to manage and develop our web site).

While the CHASS web site has maintained its position as an authoritative source of information about the activities in the sector, we have decided to upgrade this facility. During this period we drafted a long-term plan to revise the web site and associated services. This will increase our effectiveness and reach within the community.

### **B. Development of policy**

(i) The CHASS report "The relationships between the humanities, arts and social sciences (HASS) and science, technology, engineering and medicine (STEM) sectors" was launched late in 2006. We subsequently held a series of discussions on the implications of the report and the implementation of its recommendations. CHASS President Stuart Cunningham addressed the Board of the Australian Technology Network, and met with a range of people including the Federal Parliamentary Secretary for Education, the CEO of both the NHMRC and ARC, and representatives of CSIRO and the CRC Association.

Claire Donovan of ANU represented CHASS to give a paper based on this report for the Campbell Colloquium, a meeting in London on measuring the non-academic

impacts of social science research. Campbell Collaboration is an international association of (mainly) academics producing systematic reviews in social welfare, education and crime & justice.

(ii) In the reporting period, CHASS has consolidated a process of regular reviews of its policy and strategy plan. The plan is reviewed at every Board meeting, and guides the allocation of resources, effort and time.

(iii) CHASS made a strong case for the value of HASS work in two submissions to the Productivity Commission inquiry into the public investment in science and innovation: initially when the report was being drafted, and later in response to the draft report.

We argued “that the humanities, arts and social sciences are highly relevant to innovation. The HASS sector contributes in a number of ways: not just as a supporting act to science; but also as an equal partner with science, technology, engineering and medicine in collaborative projects; and in the new post smoke-stack era of industry, as innovators in their own right. A study aiming to “cover all key elements in the innovation system” should explicitly recognise the HASS contribution.”

The Productivity Commission has accepted at least some of these points, and in one area significantly changed its mind as the result of our arguments. From the final report:

“The Commission shares the view put by CHASS that research in [the creative arts, humanities and social sciences] is critical to innovation. It plays an important role in many government activities and in those instances it is routinely funded by government. It is also increasingly important in business as the service sector expands and as less technological activities play a larger role in innovation generally (such as business activities that require understanding of complex human behaviours — marketing, business re-organisation, and human resource management).” (From the Productivity Commission final report, Page 387

(iv) The CHASS submission to a review of the Federation Fellows program run by the Australian Research Council expressed concern at the low rate of appointment of researchers from the humanities, arts and social sciences, and an even lower rate of female appointments. Our submission contained nine recommendations.

### **C. Development of the contribution of CHASS to policy-making and coordination in the HASS sector**

(i) CHASS ran a workshop for Directors of university-based centres for research and education, to tackle some of the hard issues they face. “Scaling up for Greater Impact” was held at UTS in Sydney, July 3-4.

We invited Deputy Vice-Chancellors and Deans from all universities in Australia to nominate their “most innovative, network-minded and connected directors” to attend. There were 118 registrations, and most universities in Australia were represented. The symposium dealt with questions such as:

- How can directors develop strategies, generate and manage income streams, and handle the demands of mentoring early-career researchers?
- How do they communicate impact?

(ii) CHASS organised the “To Hell with Culture” symposium to explore the role of culture. The event, held at the Victoria College of the Arts, featured John Holden,

Head of Culture at Demos in London, and Stuart Cunningham, Director of the ARC Centre of Excellence for Creative Industries and Innovation at QUT.

How has culture fallen into bad odour with politicians? How can public support be enlisted? Why is culture important, and how can its value be explained? Who has to be persuaded, and what are the best tactics for each audience? Is it just Australia?

(iii) CHASS is one of seven organizations invited to nominate a representative for a review of the Australian Standard Research Classifications. The review is being conducted by the Australian Bureau of Statistics at the request of DEST.

We have played an active part in the review. We organised a discussion involving the ABS, the Academy of the Humanities and the Academy of Social Sciences, and subsequently distributed a questionnaire to our subscribers which generated over 40 responses to the ABS.

(iv) CHASS President Stuart Cunningham has been invited to give a paper to the Shanghai Jiao Tong expert meeting in November. The current system of ranking universities relies almost exclusively on the natural sciences and excludes the humanities, arts and social sciences. The paper will make a case for the inclusion of these important disciplines in international rankings systems.

(v) CHASS organised two dinners for Members of Parliament and their staffers, to discuss the issues where our sector has particular expertise. The first dinner was led by Professor Rikki Kersten, Dean of the ANU College of Asia and the Pacific. She drew on her experience of living and working in Europe to lead discussion on "Australia's Asian edge: the view from Europe".

The second was a discussion of the *Pathways to Prevention Project*, an innovative crime prevention partnership between Mission Australia and the Key Centre for Ethics, Law, Justice and Governance at Griffith University. Discussion was led by Professor Ross Homel, of Griffith University.

The project works with preschool children, aged 4-6, and their families living in a disadvantaged suburb in the south west of Brisbane. It is based on the concept of "developmental prevention" or intervention at crucial transition points which mark new experiences and relationships in life, such as when a child starts school.

These dinners were sponsored by the ANU.

#### **D. Enhance the ability and understanding of the policy-making process within the sector**

(i) CHASS convened two workshops (in Melbourne and Brisbane) for peak bodies in the visual and performing arts, architecture and design (Panel 13) to discuss the RQF. The program provided a forum for an update on developments and discussion about issues of defining research, research outcomes and the measurement of impact in the visual and performing arts as it relates to the RQF.

The workshop included major representation from all the leading disciplinary councils and networks at the tertiary level. It enabled them to meet to discuss how they were going to deal with the issues raised by the RQF.

(ii) CHASS regularly alerts its Members to the status of inquiries and reviews in areas of interest, advising them of closing dates for submissions and providing the web addresses for further information. Our newsletter list has grown to over 1100

subscribers and the list of our Member Organisations is a useful way of drawing the attention of the sector to these matters, and we have assumed a natural leadership role.

(iii) 'Humanities, Arts and Social Sciences on the Hill' (HOTH) brings people working in research and education in our sector to Canberra, for individual meetings with members of Parliament. These events include a briefing day when registrants have an opportunity to hear how they can best discuss their work with Parliamentarians.

The event is an excellent opportunity to create stronger networks, and to inform people on the most effective ways of mounting arguments with politicians. Registrants have an opportunity to question MPs on the policy-making process at the briefing day, and to become familiar with Parliament House.

(iv) The CHASS quarterly newsletter, media releases and announcements all focus on the development of policy, and alert subscribers to events and inquiries. The newsletter was reconstituted on a new electronic system in this period and has become a more effective tool for publicising issues in the humanities, arts and social sciences.

#### **E. Build international links with organisations with similar policy interests**

(i) Former CHASS President Malcolm Gillies has been appointed as Vice-chancellor of the City University, London; and continues to offer an Australian perspective to colleagues in the UK and to address events in Australia with an international perspective.

(ii) Current President Stuart Cunningham has been invited to give a paper to the Shanghai Jiao Tong expert meeting in November, on university rankings from the perspective of the humanities, arts and social sciences.

(iii) Executive Director Toss Gascoigne continues to serve on the Board of the Forum for European-Australian Science and Technology. FEAST is an organisation established to highlight, promote, and facilitate research collaboration between the European and Australian research communities.

#### **F. The CHASS Board and Staff**

My thanks to the Members of the CHASS Board, and in particular to those retiring at this meeting: Vice-President Linda Rosenman, Treasurer Julie Dyson, and Board Members Elizabeth More and Sue Richardson.

The full Board for 2006-07 is:

Professor Stuart Cunningham President  
 Professor Linda Rosenman Vice-President  
 Mr Stuart Hamilton Secretary  
 Ms Julie Dyson Treasurer  
 Professor Greg Craven  
 Professor Elizabeth More  
 Professor Sue Willis  
 Professor Sharon Bell  
 Professor Sue Richardson  
 Professor Kim Walker  
 Mr Toss Gascoigne Ex-officio non-voting Board Member

My thanks as well to CHASS staff members:  
 Toss Gascoigne, Executive Director

Mel Lamprecht, Events and Office Manager (four days a week)  
John H Howard, Director, Research (three days)  
Gemma Black, Membership Liaison Officer (three days)  
Paula Mills, Finance Officer (one day)

Thanks too to others who have worked in the CHASS office over the course of the year: Larry Ruffel, Jenni Davill, Irene Durant.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Stuart Cunningham". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Stuart Cunningham  
President  
27 September 2007