

## **SPEECH AT CHASS SYMPOSIUM ON 31 MARCH 2008**

I'd like to acknowledge the Gadigal people of the Eora Nation, whose land we meet on today.

Thank you Toss [Gascoigne] and Stuart [Cunningham] for giving me the chance to talk about the Australia Council's perspective on the innovation agenda.

It's great that CHASS has brought us all together to discuss this issue, which is becoming increasingly important to Australia, as well as the arts right now and into the foreseeable future.

While I haven't been here all day, I have read the abstracts, and have done a bit of study on what the various perspectives are. The breadth of views is refreshingly wide, which is both encouraging and challenging.

Today, I'd like to talk to you about four key things:

1. The role of creativity in innovation
2. The Australia Council's creative innovation strategy
3. The Australia Council's evolving digital agenda
4. The Australia Council's proposed response to the innovation review

Creativity and innovation are the main drivers for growth in the creative innovation economy. The Australian Government's report – *Building a creative innovation economy* – defines the creative innovation economy as the network of cultural and commercial activities and services associated with the production and consumption of creative goods and intellectual property.

Governments – and businesses – are today increasingly aware of the important role of creativity and the creative *industries* as drivers of innovation and economic growth in the broader economy.

Creativity is vital in the worldwide shift to innovation and knowledge-based economies. It underpins new concepts and forms, often linking seemingly disparate ideas.

Creativity is a central component of innovation—which frequently entails the implementation of creative ideas, the incorporation of novel ideas into

practical use—and it is increasingly important to Australia’s future as an innovative, progressive and prosperous nation. It is who we say we are as a nation, as a people.

The arts are a natural place to consider new ways of doing things, new ways of looking at things, and new ways of experiencing our world. Creation and innovation, after all, are the cornerstones of the arts – even with works that are part of ‘the canon’.

By dressing Elizabethan actors in modern day clothing, we get a different perspective on a universal subject. By interpreting a classical piece of music with guitars and drums, we are amazed by its universal beauty. By experiencing the stories of our rich Indigenous cultures, we consider solutions to our environmental challenges.

Australian artists and creative practitioners – working across tertiary, not-for-profit, and commercial sectors in Australia and elsewhere – play a vital role in enhancing and growing Australia’s innovation economy. They are the ‘core producers’ of our high-growth creative industries.

Collaborative, cross-disciplinary practice and research—the hallmarks of much artistic practice today—are important prerequisites for solving complex issues, and provide a foundation for new scientific discovery, new knowledge and wealth creation.

How do I know this? As a marketer for 30 years, I have been on the economy side of a part of the creative economy. My work has been all about new product development and innovation, creative expression of unique brands, and commercialisation of ideas. Artists and arts organisations have always been key players in working with our organisations to help us accomplish this, from visual artists who drew pictures of our evolving organisational culture, to actors who played back our brand stories, to artists who led our engineers in discussions about creativity and innovation, to the musicians who helped us compare the challenges of leading an orchestra to leading an organisation.

Many artists will tell you they just want to create, and that’s great. But there is also a lot of interest in the process of creating and how it can be applied to our world – artists, scientists, educators, and even engineers share this interest.

I believe what we are talking about here is a cycle called: create, learn, share, harvest. What is the creative process? How can it be applied across sectors? Try it!

The Australia Council celebrates creativity every day. In fact, part of our criteria for funding arts projects is their level of creativity and innovation. We are very aware that this creative spirit is a treasure chest for Australian innovation. The challenge is understanding the many ways of being creative and applying them across our creative economy.

In 2005, the Australia Council developed a Creative Innovation Strategy to respond to this challenge. It's a coordinated approach to supporting creativity as one of Australia's most valuable assets.

The strategy drives the many initiatives supported by the Australia Council that enhance Australian creativity and build pathways to successful innovation, spanning creative skills, enterprise and leadership.

These initiatives form a solid basis from which to build future partnerships across government portfolios, industry and research sectors.

Building innovation and knowledge-based economies is one of the Australian Government's top priorities, and it is investigating ways to accelerate enterprise development and innovation. The Australia Council believes its Creative Innovation Strategy helps address the changing dynamics of our growing creative industries.

Today's artists and creative practitioners are increasingly looking to governments and cultural agencies, such as the Australia Council, to move beyond 'grant giving'. They are looking to us to find new ways to help them earn income through their creative enterprises, and ensure their long-term viability. At the same time, Australian business is looking for more innovative systems and products to gain a competitive edge.

This leads increasingly to a multidisciplinary approach, drawing on talents and new works emerging from the social sciences, humanities and arts.

Through its Creative Innovation Strategy, the Australia Council seeks to play an active role in Australia's evolving innovation economy. The core objectives of the strategy are:

- To nourish a climate of creativity through direct and indirect support for artists, creative practitioners and organisations – be they arts or business, as an example.
- To establish and grow new partnerships and pathways between artists and creative practitioners and organisations, government, cultural agencies and industry, both nationally and internationally
- To add value to the Australian Government’s investment in skills and education, digital content and technology innovation, regional sustainability, trade and industry development.

To meet these objectives, the Australia Council looks to engage a broad range of partners and stakeholders across government, the tertiary education sector as well as industry.

The strategy comprises four key components, built on an ‘innovation value chain’ which begins with supporting pathways for creators and leads to commercialisation and innovation of their creative works.

The four key components of the Creative Innovation Strategy are:

- Education – creative schools
- Cross-disciplinary research
- Leadership
- Commercialisation

### **1. Creative Schools: Promoting arts education in schools**

There are major implications for education when we acknowledge the ability to innovate as one of the key capabilities of the knowledge economy, both for individuals and communities. New ways of generating, distributing and applying knowledge are transforming what students need to learn, how they learn, and what we need and expect from education.

In its March 2003 discussion paper, the Committee for the Review of Teaching and Teacher Education confirmed what I suspect we all believe, that the arts have a big role to play in contributing to the development of a culture of innovation in schools and other educational settings.

Schools are faced with the challenge of finding new ways to cater to the diverse interests and learning styles of individual students, and more

creative means of educating students to reach their potential and meet the needs of the knowledge economy. Learning in and through the arts can help schools meet this innovation challenge.

To realize this potential, we believe a systemic approach is needed for:

- curriculum and teaching methods in the arts and other subject areas
- professional development and training for educators and artists
- finding and testing new ways for schools to connect with arts and creative organisations to engage children and young people in their own learning.

The Australia Council has led the call for greater commitment to strengthening the links between education and the arts in Australia. We continue to drive and support a number of nationally and internationally significant initiatives, which have the potential to create unprecedented opportunities for artists, educators and students in Australia.

One of these initiatives is the National Statement on Education and the Arts, which the Australia Council has helped develop with the Cultural Ministers Council and the Ministerial Council for Education, Employment, Training and Youth Affairs. The statement acknowledges that our future prosperity demands a well-informed and active citizenry. Communication is critical here, but so is original thinking, adaptability to change, a collaboration orientation and a problem solving focus.

Australia Council research demonstrates that school-based arts participation contributes to developing these very abilities in students. We also know that good quality arts and education partnerships improve student attitudes to learning and contribute to better quality teaching and school leadership.

The Australia Council has undertaken significant work in this area. Some of the many initiatives we have supported are:

- Hosting two preparatory events for the UNESCO World Conference on Arts Education in 2006 –*Backing our Creativity* national symposium and *International Mini-summit on Education and the Arts*
- Management of the National Review of Education in Visual Arts, Craft, Design and Visual Communication, co-funded by DEST

- Co-commissioning a global compendium on arts education in partnership with the International Federation of Arts Councils and Cultural Agencies (IFACCA) and UNESCO
- Production of a national overview of research on the impact of arts participation on student learning and development
- Establishment of a directory of arts companies providing educational programs and activities for schools
- Development of a pilot arts education program for remote communities in northern Australia
- Partnerships with the Centre of Excellence in Creative Industries and Innovation (Queensland University of Technology) to enhance research methodologies and determine future priorities for education and the arts.

Our Creative Innovation Strategy continues to be a platform for the Australia Council to grow the value of its work through partnerships with an increased number of stakeholders.

## **2. A Cross-Disciplinary Research Framework - Synapse Research:**

The transfer of specialist knowledge and skills across disciplines is vital for generating new ideas, products and services. In the sciences, the adoption of cross-disciplinary approaches to discovery and innovation has given rise to important new fields such as bioengineering and nanotechnology. The role of cross-disciplinary approaches to practice and discovery is no less important in the creative arts.

Artists have been practising at the edges of their artforms for centuries, and it is this ability to work across specialist fields, to address complexity and to find new answers to old questions, that is generating interest in the role of creativity in innovation. The same spirit of critical enquiry now sees a growing number of artists investigating and translating their creative practice using research-based methodologies—what is now termed ‘practice-based research’.

In our universities and colleges, however, the value and impact of research in the arts remains poorly understood. In particular, applications for Australian Research Council competitive grants in the area of creative arts suffer from very low success rates compared to other disciplines,

partly because measures of value and output do not adequately capture creative works, and instead favour text-based mediums, such as journal citations.

In this context, the Australia Council has been acknowledged for taking a leadership role, by establishing a comprehensive and coordinated approach to arts/science collaboration via its Synapse Art and Science Strategy. A memorandum of understanding with the ARC enables the two agencies to work together to support innovation in areas where Australia can be globally competitive and deliver benefits to the community.

Through its relationship with the ARC and other key organisations, such as CHASS, the Australia Council is helping build research capability in the arts and grow recognition and investment in emerging, cross-disciplinary areas of creative practice.

### **Synapse: A Cross-Disciplinary Research Framework**

The objective of the Australia Council's Synapse program is to encourage creative and experimental collaborations between creative practitioners and scientists through:

- Australian Research Council Linkage Grant Industry Partnerships
- Synapse Residencies
- Synapse Database.

Critical to the success of Synapse has been the involvement of a range of key stakeholders, including the ARC, the Australian Network for Art and Technology (ANAT) and the Commonwealth Scientific and Industrial Research Organisation (CSIRO).

The Australia Council's Synapse Research framework promotes and grows existing support for research in the creative arts and improves research capability in cross-disciplinary areas. It heightens awareness across the government, tertiary and industry sectors of the value and impacts of creative practice and arts-based research.

Considering the Australia Council's ongoing support for cross-disciplinary research and practice, Synapse Research has the following priorities:

1. Increased support for cross-disciplinary creative practice
2. Improved research capability in the arts
3. Expanding networks, partnerships and investment opportunities

This has been a particularly exciting project whose outcomes have provided quite a lot of learning for further development.

### **3. Creative Leadership: Developing creative leaders and international exchange**

What can the arts be and do? How do the arts and cultural policy advance and shape Australia's public interest? What 'core values' do the arts embody in the context of high-growth creative industries? How does the arts sector engage with the international development agenda?

By providing a platform for speakers and industry leaders, the Australia Council's Creative Leadership initiative establishes a more coordinated contribution to such critical national and international debates. The initiative recognises that the arts sector represents a diverse ecology, made up of intersecting networks of practitioners, administrators, policy makers and audiences, each playing a role in articulating the value of the arts in our ever-changing society.

Invited speakers stimulate new directions, offer challenges and enliven the arts debate. In particular, Creative Leadership facilitates discussion around the cultural and public values of the arts, beyond simplistic instrumental approaches, and responds to frustrations such as those expressed by former UK Minister for the Arts, Estelle Morris:

*I know that arts and culture make a contribution to health, to education, to crime reduction, to strong communities, to the nation's wellbeing, but I don't know how to evaluate it or describe it. We have to find a language and a way of describing its worth. It's the only way we'll secure the greater support we need.*

The core elements of Creative Leadership are:

- forums and workshops with international experts and visionaries to generate public discussion about the role of creativity and the arts across areas of national interest, such as innovation, international development and community

sustainability. Examples are: visits by Chris Powell, chairman of the UK's National Endowment of Science, Technology and the Arts (NESTA), and Charles Landry, international expert in urban renewal and development.

- support for Australia's next generation of cultural leaders, through mentoring and international exchange
- potential cross-agency collaborations between the Australia Council and international development agencies, including AusAID
- ongoing promotion of and support for the cultural and public values of the arts in progressing issues of national significance.

#### **4. Create and Accelerate: Support for creative enterprise and innovation**

Most Australian artists continue to earn low incomes and face many obstacles to generating income from their art. With 80 per cent of professional practising artists now employed as freelancers or contractors, many are effectively operating as micro-businesses and working across multiple sectors—but without much needed support.

In August 2004, the Australia Council adopted a plan to improve artists' incomes, in response to the findings of a survey into individual artists' income and employment circumstances as reported in *Don't Give Up Your Day Job* by Professor David Throsby and Virginia Hollister.

The Australia Council's plan recognises the significant entrepreneurialism of creative practitioners, and identifies a lack of start-up capital and business development skills as precluding many artists from accessing business development opportunities.

The Australia Council's plan also includes a range of initiatives in creative industry development, two of which have already assisted artists to build pathways to commercialisation in high growth areas: Maker to Manufacturer to Market and Mobile Journeys.

It also includes a database of available federal, state and local government industry assistance programs (IAPS) that can be promoted or adapted to assist artists.

Create and Accelerate is a program of support to artists in building sustainable and rewarding creative careers. It offers information and services to support the Australia Council's activity in the area of artists earned income. The core elements of Create and Accelerate are:

- Access to information on existing IAPs for creative industries, including an interactive 'money map'
- Information about initiatives funded through the Australia Council's strategic initiatives in the area of artists earned incomes
- Continued investigation of digital content distribution models for creative content and applications
- An industry partnership with the QUT Centre of Excellence in Creative Industries and Innovation, which includes research in the area of Creative Enterprises and Sustainability.

The Australia Council supports innovation in the arts in a number of other ways. One is our heightened focus on arts in the digital era.

We support innovation through programs that build the art sector's capacity to develop creative content for new media platforms, which as you probably know, is currently something of a 'hot topic' among members of the Cultural Minister's Council. In fact, some of you might have read the paper *Building a Creative Innovation Economy* that came out of the CMC's last meeting. For those of you who haven't, you can download a copy from their website: [www.cmc.gov.au](http://www.cmc.gov.au) It's a great read and I strongly commend it to you.

Whichever way you look at it, online, mobile and other digital platforms are becoming increasingly important prisms through which we view the world. Some estimates put the size of the digital content industry at a massive \$40 billion by 2015. Which is precisely why the Australia Council will continue to invest in programs that help artists create art using digital mediums.

These include support for initiatives in Second Life, such as our world-first, 'in world' artists residency program, the fruits of which our chairman James Strong will launch in Lismore next month. It also includes support for some of the exciting work being created for mobile phones such as ANAT's Pixel Play and Portable Worlds.

And our Story of the Future initiative to encourage Australian writers to engage with the digital realm, which – in conjunction with AFTRS – is taking a number of very exciting digital projects to the brink of commercial production.

And finally, there's our new partnership with the national public broadcaster ABC TV that will give more Australians access to more of the Australian arts across the full spectrum of digital mediums. You will be reading more about this in the coming weeks.

These are all important steps in realising the Australia Council's ambition to play a bigger and more potent role in the world of digital arts content.

The Australia Council is keen to participate in the Australian Government's Review of Australia's Innovation System because, as I said earlier, we regard creativity as the central component of innovation. If it delivers on its promise, the review is likely to have implications that extend beyond the innovation system in science and technology.

Naturally, the Australia Council is preparing a submission to the review. An extension of our creative innovation strategy, an important focus will be on the role of the arts in fostering creativity throughout the education system.

It's our belief that this is how the arts can most effectively add value to Australia's wider innovation system.

Your thoughts or suggestions on this proposal are most welcome. Feel free to talk to me later, or drop me an email, or have a chat with one of my colleagues who are here today.

Finally, there's another important reason why we'll remain interested in the outcomes of the Government's review – and that lies in its terms of reference.

A key aim of the review is to identify principles that underpin the role of the public sector in innovation. This will provide a framework on which to continue to build a system of government support for innovation over the coming years.

The implications of this are obvious for the Australia Council. Because the review will say things and make recommendations that are applicable to the arts on some level. And a framework that helps the Australia

Council better support creativity and encourage innovation in the arts will be very good for the sector.

After all, we all want an arts sector – and an Australia Council – that is driven by new ideas and better ways of doing our business.

The Australia Council is a critical enabler – not just of excellence in the creative process of the arts, but also the transfer of this wonderful wealth of innovative thinking into the innovation economy.

To do that, we should be more conscious of how the innovation agenda can provide opportunities for artists to take this type of thinking into Australian life.

Thank you.

[ENDS]