

21 June 2006

Hon Julie Bishop MP  
Minister for Education, Science and Training  
PARLIAMENT HOUSE

Dear Minister

### **Knowledge Transfer**

Thank you for your speech to the Knowledge Transfer and Engagement Forum in Sydney last Friday. I know that the meeting appreciated the clarity with which you set out the timetable and the process for moving to a Research Quality Framework. My colleagues in the Humanities, Arts and Social Science (HASS) sectors particularly appreciated the guide you offered to your current frame of mind in relation to some of the issues yet to be decided, and to the areas where we might usefully contribute further to the Framework's evolution.

Your indication of a willingness to consider a Knowledge Transfer initiative was wonderful news, and I would like to offer the views of the Council for the Humanities, Arts and Social Sciences (CHASS) to that discussion of Knowledge Transfer.

In responding to the Knowledge Transfer debate at last week's forum I was particularly mindful of how these sectors -- representing some half of Australian university staff -- are often still unengaged in discussions of research impact or knowledge transfer. Yet these same staff are vital to the success of so many of the social, human, environmental and economic outcomes to which Australia is committed. I would like to approach any Knowledge Transfer initiative through the issue of commitment and incentive: what contributions can these sectors reasonably make, and how can those contributions be encouraged and rewarded?

CHASS's perception is that the Government would like a sector characterised by academic work which:

- has impact of clear benefit to Australia
- is collaborative, and involves industry, colleagues, the community and other institutions
- has quality, as evidenced through a diversity of cases and a diversity of indicators
- focuses on solving problems or creating new opportunities
- sustains and builds the social and cultural fabric of our society
- gives a return on investment, whether direct or indirect
- is strong intellectually, in fundamental, applied and professional terms.

Government programs have a great capacity to drive behaviours of commitment. If a program to encourage Knowledge Transfer were to be devised, I suggest that

CHASS PO Box 8157 ANU ACT 2601  
Phone: (02) 6249 1995 Fax: (02) 6247 4335  
Web: [www.chass.org.au](http://www.chass.org.au) Email: [director@chass.org.au](mailto:director@chass.org.au)

enhanced engagement of the humanities, arts and social sciences sectors might be achieved if

- measurable outcomes were required, but in more ways than the simply economic. HASS needs to be encouraged to define its contributions directly in social, human and environmental ways, some of which do not have meaningful economic correlates;
- the Knowledge Transfer exercise is considered to be more than an off-shoot of current research or research-quality debates. The depth of HASS scholarship, and its manifest success in recent years in the field of educational commercialisation, suggests that -- for these sectors -- a broad research and education involvement needs to be encouraged. Indeed, this research-and-education engagement was the basis of the "third stream" initiative in the United Kingdom, as seen even in its name.

I would be pleased to talk with you, or your representatives, at any time about the features of a Knowledge Transfer initiative that might best engage the humanities, arts and social sciences sectors.

Yours sincerely,

(Professor) Malcolm Gillies  
President