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CHASS Board Member Emeritus Professor Meredith Edwards AM addressed the Cooperative Research Centres Association's annual 2009 conference, *Pathfinders: the Innovators' conference*. This comes at a time when the CRC program opens up to proposals led by humanities arts and social science researchers. A former head of the National Institute of Governance and Deputy Secretary in the Department of Prime Minister and Cabinet, Professor Edwards is working on how to effectively manage knowledge translation between researchers and policy makers.

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"A couple of years ago I interviewed senior public servants and academics as part of a research review of the ANZSOG (spell out). Many comments were made about the fragility of relationships across the so called divide. One stark rhetorical question from a senior official was "What is the difference between an academic and a terrorist? Answer: You can negotiate with a terrorist". Hopefully that is an extreme position.

This brings me to my first point about *what works best* in gaining use of research in the policy process. There is now much evidence now about what works best –and it is the use of *interactive and ongoing processes and relationships* between policy and research people. It is this that works to break down cultural barriers. The linear relationship from research output to policy decisions is generally seen to be inferior. In other words, for research to impact on the policy process, research needs to be become more part of the policy process and vice versa.

What does this mean at a more practical level? For those we interviewed, one mechanism stood out above all others when dealing with complex or emerging policy issues - the use of roundtables or workshops. A dozen or so reasons were given for this preference but essentially they were seen as a cost-effective way of sharing ideas, analyses or perspectives, as well as a means of breaking down cultural barriers. Recently ANZSOG has successfully held government-academia roundtables around key agenda items as part of the COAG process.

Another favoured mechanism for facilitating interaction is the use of either academics or public servants as knowledge brokers from within government or within academia to make the necessary connections within and across the sectors. You could think of many possible models here. Some good ones are in use overseas such as the UK arrangement of an office of the Chief Social Researcher working alongside the Chief Scientist inside government and linking to researchers outside of government. The NZ Emerging Issues Program at the University of Victoria Wellington, is a good example of successful knowledge brokering where an academic Policy Institute brokers across disciplines and interacting with government on policy relevant cross-cutting research. In the CRC context the use of knowledge brokers could help shield brilliant yet introverted researchers from the rough and tumble of managing relationships with businesses or government. I am sadly reminded here of the considerable skills we lost in the passing of Professor Peter Cullen.

My second and related point with relevance for the CRC process relates to the evidence that shows the importance for policy impact of the early clarification, with relevant stakeholder dialogue, of what the problem actually is. A recent Review of New Zealand CRC-equivalent program bears this out. My own experience is that until key stakeholders agree on the nature of the problem it is hard to work out an appropriate research strategy let alone move the decision making process forward toward solution.

My final point is that the *Humanities, Arts and Social Sciences disciplines* can play many critical roles in the research/ policy process – especially around cross-cutting challenges which require an integrated disciplinary approach. Social scientists can tell us what works and why and what type of policy initiatives are likely to be most effective. They can also assist in the design, use and adaptation of new technologies, and they can study how knowledge is generated, understand the impact of new technology on society and more broadly can contribute much about human behaviour. For example, Professor Leon Mann, notes that Nokia gained dominance in mobile market by employing two psychologists to study the interaction of 12 year olds with mobile technologies, which led to the discovery of texting. This is an example of behavior led technological development.

Despite the huge cultural and other challenges involved in linking disciplinary research domains on the one hand and research and policy on the other, I hope you agree with CHASS that there are glimmers of hope ahead. First is the renewed commitment to a public good focus in the CRC program by the government. Second is the statement of intent in the recent Innovation white paper - Powering Ideas - with its proposal to introduce Compacts with universities which will reward collaboration and knowledge exchange in line with longer term government policy priorities. I suggest we come back in a year's time and assess how well we have done in meeting our collaborative challenges both across discipline domains and the policy-research divide."

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