

September 2007

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1. Humanities and the RQF Workshop: October 4

[This practical workshop](#) will examine the nuts and bolts of the RQF, and particularly the notion of Impact.

Featured speakers include Humanities RQF Panel Chair Iain McCalman and a progress report from Leanne Harvey, Branch Manager of the Research Quality Branch at DEST.

There will be a combination of speakers, panel discussions and breakout sessions. The workshop will enable humanities researchers to discuss practical solutions to the demands of the RQF. The agenda allows plenty of time for informal meetings.

The agenda will also look into the future, to see how the RQF process might develop and change eg under an alternative government.

Morning tea, lunch and afternoon tea are included in the registration fee, and there will be an optional dinner following the workshop (Thursday evening) for those wishing to continue the discussions into the evening.

CHASS is partnered in this event by the University of Sydney and the Australian Academy of the Humanities.

The workshop will be held in the Holme Building, Science Rd at the University of Sydney.



2. Electing the new Board

The CHASS process is that a Search Committee established by the Board considers possible candidates, and comes up with a slate of candidates it will recommend to the AGM.

It is still open to Member Organisations to nominate other candidates, and this process is set out below.

The slate to be put to the AGM is:

- Professor Sharon Bell* DVC, University of Canberra
- Dr John Byron, Executive Director, the Australian Academy of the Humanities
- Professor Greg Craven*, VC, Australian Catholic University (from 2008)
- Mr Stuart Hamilton*, Chief Executive, Open Universities Australia
- Professor Ross Homel, Director of the Key Centre for Ethics, Law, Justice and Governance, Griffith University
- Ms Helen O'Neil, Executive Director, Australian Major Performing Arts Group
- Ms Catrina Vignando, General Manager, Craft Australia
- Professor Kim Walker*, Dean, Sydney Conservatorium of Music
- Professor Sue Willis*, Dean of Education, Monash University

Professor Stuart Cunningham was elected President for two years in 2006.*

(indicates a current Board member)*

Brief biographies of all these candidates will be posted on the CHASS web site.

The Search Committee lamented that it was simply not possible to include all the excellent candidates proposed for consideration. There are many interests to balance, including geography, gender, disciplines, institutions.

As I remarked in my report to the Board, "we are in the fortunate position that competition for Board positions is very strong, and that CHASS has been able to attract the interest of many well-credentialed people."

3. Nominating other candidates for the CHASS Board

It is still open to Member Organisations to nominate other candidates. These nominations must be received in the CHASS office before 5 pm on Tuesday 25 September.

Nominations should be made on the form available from the CHASS web site.

One additional nomination has been received so far: Professor Faith Trent, President of the DASSH Deans.



4. AGM Tuesday 2 October

The AGM will be held at 4 pm on Tuesday 2 October, at University House at the University of Melbourne. We have invited all Member Organisations to nominate a representative. The meeting is also open to friends of CHASS. Further information is posted on our web site.

If you wish to attend, either as the representative of one of our Member Organisations or as a friend of CHASS, see our website for a simple registration form, to help us with organisation.

Guest speaker is Dr Terry Cutler, former Chair of the Australia Council, former acting Chair of CSIRO and current member of the CSIRO board, and industry consultant and strategy advisor in the information and communication technology sector. He has had a longstanding engagement with public policy and served on a number of government boards and advisory bodies.

After the AGM, all Members and friends are invited to join the CHASS Board for drinks.



5. Review of RFCD codes

DEST has commissioned the Australian Bureau of Statistics to review the Research Fields, Courses and Disciplines (RFCD). CHASS was invited to nominate a person for the Reference Committee for this process, and put forward Linda Butler of the ANU; and we have been actively involved in the process for the last 6 months.

The draft codes came out last month, and after consultation, we made 15 recommendations for changes to the draft. Our letter is being posted to the CHASS web site.

These included a strong view that "the amalgamation of History, Archaeology, Religion and Philosophy was unfortunate, and these disciplines should be separated, each with their own 2-digit code: History and Archaeology, and Religion and Philosophy".

The new codes will be launched early in 2008, with the term *RFCD* replaced by *Fields of Research*.



6. Delivering Outcomes: Symposium for centre directors

[The third symposium](#) for the directors of university-based centres of research and education was held earlier this month at RMIT.

Billed as an event for "the most innovative, network-minded and connected directors in universities", it aims to allow directors to discuss matters of common interest."

The RQF was top of the list this year. Leanne Harvey from DEST and three panel Chairs (Sue Rowley, Ian Palmer and Iain McCalman) led a spirited session exploring nuts and bolts issues round the RQF.

This panel was very positive about opportunities opening up under the new assessment processes. It was described as "an enormous advance" for the HASS sector, and "a clear shift away from counting, to the quality of what's counted". They said that even if the RQF changes with a change of government, "the process has been enormously productive".

Earlier, Margaret Sheil talked about her first impressions of the ARC after 2 weeks as the new CEO, and answered questions ranging from the new RFCD codes and the review of Federation Fellows program, to issues on the assessing of multi-disciplinary proposals.

The symposium opened with a discussion on a new report on the value the universities of Melbourne provide to that city, led by Julie Wells of RMIT.

Our thanks to RMIT as host organization, and speakers and chairs who led an interesting series of discussions.

7. CHASS is moving office!

Sadly, we are leaving the ANU campus and our office in the Academy of Social Sciences. We are expanding and so is the Academy; and the ANU could offer no alternative space.

The bright side is that we take over splendid new space at the University of Canberra. Information about new phone numbers will be available in 2 weeks, after the move takes place on 18 September.

And all Members and friends will be invited to our opening party, as soon as a date is set.



8. The PM's Science Council, Chief Scientist: Reviews needed

An update: regular readers will recall that in June we wrote to the Prime Minister about his Science Council:

"... the time has come to reconsider two of the most significant and relatively long-standing mechanisms your Government has for advising on science and innovation policy - the Prime Minister's Science, Engineering and Innovation Council, and the position of Chief Scientist. We

suggest broadening their mandate to advise on all aspects of innovation, whether related to the natural sciences, the social sciences, or the arts and humanities. Many of the most significant issues Australia faces need contributions from all disciplines if solutions are to be found."

The Prime Minister referred our letter to Chief Scientist Dr Jim Peacock, and we subsequently discussed these matters with him. He appeared comfortable with the existing arrangements, but thought there might be a place for a HASS person on the standing committee of PMSEIC. (The standing committee consists of the non-ministerial members plus other experts brought in to help prepare detailed cases to take to the full Council.)

At Dr Peacock's suggestion, we wrote to him requesting such an appointment, making it clear we see this as an interim step. PMSEIC working parties have seen fit from time to time to include HASS experts, but there are no ex officio positions from HASS whereas there are about 10 ex officio positions from science. Our correspondence is continuing.

But we are battling a line of thinking that seems deeply embedded in government, in Australia but also other countries. This line sees solutions to all problems lying solely or significantly in science, technology and engineering.

Although PMSEIC has recently dealt with issues such as *Water in our Cities* and *Climate Change in Australia*, the humanities, arts and social sciences are not seen as having any frontline role in devising solutions to these intractable issues.

Regards

Stuart Cunningham

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