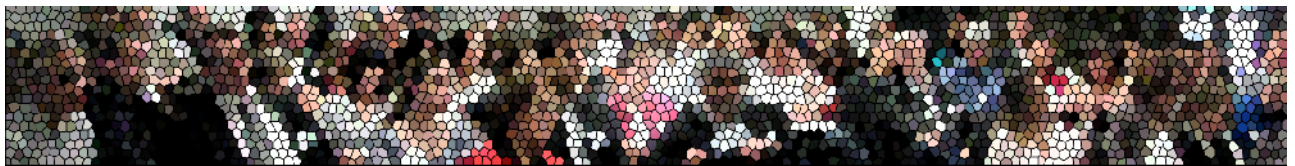




Council for the
humanities, arts
& social sciences

Towards a National Cultural Policy for Australia



OCTOBER 2011

COUNCIL FOR THE HUMANITIES, ARTS AND SOCIAL SCIENCES

LPO BOX 5086,
UNIVERSITY OF CANBERRA, BRUCE 2617
T: 61 2 6201 2740 | F: 61 2 6201 2132

WWW.CHASS.ORG.AU

ABN 75017337844

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Cultural life is a proudly held aspect of our heritage and of our future ambitions for Australia.

National Cultural Policy should set the vision for Australian culture and broad policy objectives, engage with all Australians, embrace social, constitutional, immigration and foreign policy dimensions as part of its diversity goal, and protect Indigenous culture. Key to its success will be how well the policy is structured to enable coordination of policies across education, arts and heritage and citizenship.

The Council supports the development of a new National Cultural Policy for Australia and in particular the goal of diversity. CHASS makes the following recommendations:

- 1) Ensure whole-of-government coordination embedding the national cultural policy within policies in industry, in the digital economy, and in education and research.
- 2) Expand the National Cultural Policy goals to include a goal which aims to promote a dynamic cultural heritage that is preserved, easily accessed and continually developed and which facilitates cultural connection and expression for all Australians.
- 3) Commission research to track better the career outcomes of the buoyant number of graduates from further and higher education in the arts and creative industries, joining the dots between education investment and the health of the cultural sector.
- 4) Ensure an inter-connection with the national curriculum process to provide for knowledge transfer and exchanges between university-based research and training in cultural and other relevant areas in the public, private and non-profit sectors.
- 5) Embed culture within the content development guidelines for the NBN to have the effect of bridging any cultural divide and will result in getting the most out of the NBN.
- 6) Prioritise funding to enable connections between the arts, civic culture, media, industry and social policy.
- 7) Develop innovative funding strategies.
- 8) Properly fund programs for digitisation and the introduction of new technologies to ensure preservation of cultural heritage and allow for the collection and study of new and changing characteristics.
- 9) Augment structures such as Austrade to enable exploration of new ideas, opportunities and markets.

INTRODUCTION

CHASS promotes and provides advocacy services for the humanities, arts and social sciences across Australia, with 95 member organisations including learned academies, universities, research centres, national peak bodies, and professional associations. Many, if not all, of our members have an active interest in cultural policy, in its connection to education, research and regional, social and economic development. As such, CHASS welcomes the Australian government's developments towards a new national cultural policy, as well as the opportunity to respond to the National Cultural Policy Discussion Paper released by the Federal Minister for the Arts in August 2011.

We welcome the general tenets of the discussion paper, which accords with the two key suggestions that CHASS outlined in its response to the government's initial framework paper titled *Towards A National Cultural Policy* released in 2009. First, that government must utilise the resources it has to enable innovation in the arts and rapid development of Australian artists and art makers, given the range of technological change and new communications networks which have created a range of new ways for

Australians to participate in and contribute to the arts. Second, that government must move to support and encourage connections between the arts and broader areas of civic life in culture, industry and social policy. See www.chass.org.au/submissions/SUB20100215HH.php

In order to prepare a response to the current Discussion Paper, CHASS convened a workshop with over ninety participating organisations on 2 August 2011 at the University of Western Sydney. Participants were invited to discuss opportunities facing Australia in the context of the development of a National Cultural Policy for the 21st Century. The workshop allowed a broad-ranging discussion based on short presentations from key thinkers involved in the arts, creative arts, industry, education and business sectors, in addition to government officials and the Parliamentary Secretary representing the Minister for Arts, Senator the Hon Kate Lundy.

All participants reaffirmed the significant role that arts and culture plays in the lives of all Australians and the importance it has in underpinning our economy and productivity. There was overwhelming support for embedding the national cultural policy within policies in industry, in the digital economy, and in education and research. The consensus view from the forum was that for a country the size of Australia, we produce a great deal of cultural product. Participants agreed that even though culture is a complex notion to define, it is in fact all around us, in everything Australians do, see, watch and hear; in how we interact, communicate, and generally express ourselves. Culture is broader than arts and encompasses all facets of Australian life but includes key industries that provide strong economic returns.

It is not possible, nor do we believe is it desirable, for CHASS to fully represent every member's views the full range of discussion points raised in the Discussion Paper. In what follows, we outline particular policy aspirations, priorities and opportunities raised by participants at the 2 August workshop, with associated case studies to demonstrate these points.

1. CHASS supports the goal of diversity

The goal of diversity in support for Australian culture and the arts has been important to government policy for a generation. The aim has always been to invigorate, to enhance access and equity for all Australians. CHASS supports this goal as it represents continuity in public policy. Importantly, CHASS supports the strategies listed to aid the goal of diversity, for example, continuing to work with arts organisations, cultural partners and local authorities to identify and build greater audiences particularly in places where engagement in the arts is low. In particular, CHASS supports initiatives aimed at increasing people's engagement in the arts, irrespective of their socio-economic or educational background or their geographic location. The link between the arts and education is in enabling societal expression and community cohesion.

2. Whole-of-Government Coordination

A truly effective National Cultural Policy will be one that is integrated into programs in schools, local government, new media and longstanding media and infrastructure across all communities in Australia. It will affect the Australian economy and society by building upon the core activities in the arts and creative industries. It must enable coordination with other policies across education, arts and heritage and citizenship; to equally support creative industries and arts policy and effectively represent Australia's cultural institutions, including galleries and museums. A ten year strategic framework to realise this vision will require whole-of-government support at the Federal level, and support also from State and Territory Governments to be effective. If the starting point for the development of a new National Cultural Policy for Australia is no new money, this will require significant cutting of red tape and incentives for clever enterprise. It will also pose challenges for decision-makers to determine who within the framework receives government support. In the absence of the Cultural Ministers Council, CHASS suggests that it is incumbent upon a National Cultural Policy to articulate clearly the intergovernmental mechanisms necessary to ensure efficient and effective delivery of coordinated programmes in support of such a policy.

Recommendation 1: Ensure whole-of-government coordination embedding the national cultural policy within policies in industry, in the digital economy, and in education and research

3. Investment in Cultural and Collection Institutions (including the ABC)

We have a large number of state institutions, collecting and non-collecting institutions. There are many not-for-profit organisations and community groups involved across a wide range of service providers, in commercial galleries, in independent spaces, and in festivals. An extraordinary breadth and depth already exists in cultural pursuits and product. The ABC is a highly valued segment of communicating Australian culture today, and it reflects contemporary arts and culture, technology and acts as central point of contact for people from other countries seeking to interact with Australia. CHASS recommends that using this existing infrastructure, but demanding of it new deliverables consistent with the priorities in the National Cultural Policy, will result in an appropriate balance between old and new.

CHASS recommends the National Cultural Policy goals be expanded to include a goal which aims to promote a dynamic cultural heritage that is preserved, easily accessed and continually developed and which facilitates cultural connection and expression for all Australians. Other priorities noted by the collecting institutions are the importance of cultural memory and the heritage collections, institutions and organisations which sustain and develop it; identify and fully utilize the distributed national collections; rejuvenate the structures and funding programs for cultural heritage activity; and the government's investment in museums is linked to and supports national priorities in education, science, innovation, community engagement, tourism and international relations.

Recommendation 2: Expand the National Cultural Policy goals to include a goal which aims to promote a dynamic cultural heritage that is preserved, easily accessed and continually developed and which facilitates cultural connection and expression for all Australians.

4. Investment in Education in and through Arts, Design, Media and Communication

4.1 In Early Childhood and School Aged

There is a critical role played by the creative arts in lifting Australia's educational attainment, and CHASS recommends formal alignment between the National Cultural Policy and the National Curriculum consistent with the Discussion Paper's aspirations for 'joining the dots'. This would best be achieved by sharing information between MCEECDYA and MCTEE on a regular basis.

4.2 In Higher Education

Australian culture continues to benefit through the provision of higher education in the broad cultural mix of art, design, media and communication. Our universities provide courses in contemporary art and design, provide curatorial services, and offer critical analysis and scholarship. These combined academic and professional orientations are fostered through field trips, conferences, student exchanges, exhibitions and industry placements. It is part of their core business to give students a complete and rounded education and universities are role models in support to the arts and culture. For example, *Monash University Museum of Art (MUMA)* is a prolific publisher, and is renowned for the way in which its publications act as a meeting point for art historical scholarship and current artistic practice. Similarly *Flinders University City Gallery* conducts a program of changing exhibitions with an emphasis on contemporary Indigenous art.

Universities are also world-class educators in the disciplines of art, contemporary music, dance, film and television, music theatre, production and theatre. The Victorian College of the Arts (VCA), for example, has

produced some of Australia's most significant artists including Fred McCubbin, Tom Roberts, Rupert Bunney, Arthur Boyd, Clara Southern, Margaret Preston, Joy Hester, Clifton Pugh and Fred Williams.

Universities also lead the way with interdisciplinary practice and research excellence in the creation and expression of ideas through new media, design and the more traditional methods of art creation. In turn, this stimulates dialogue with the wider community and assists the young and creative with meaningful expression. Many universities provide courses in art, design, media, art education and art theory. For example, the College of Fine Art of the University of New South Wales provides courses in art, design, media, art education and art theory. QUT Creative Industries leads in articulating an enterprise approach to arts, cultural and creative industries, and headquarters a nationally-funded ARC Centre of Excellence in Creative in Industries and Innovation.

Recommendation 3: CHASS recommends research to be conducted to track better the career outcomes of the buoyant number of graduates from further and higher education in the arts and creative industries, joining the dots between education investment and the health of the cultural sector.

4.3 In support for readership

A mainstreamed cultural policy must have drivers which connect school curriculum with new technology, and to Australian content, then foster connectivity with higher education and preparation in the arts. For example, Australians are avid book readers and CHASS notes with concern the draft discussion paper is silent on the issue of maintaining a capacity for strong readership in Australia including as they are affected by publishing and copyright.

4.4 In support for cultural literacy (cultural education)

Culturally literate people understand the history and concepts that underlie a culture, and can converse with others on the content of that culture. Cultural literacy provides a language for describing the culture and the cultural products of both Australia and The World. It enables people to better understand these products and gain a firmer appreciation for them. Investing in all levels of education, formal and informal, should keep students in touch with the diverse cultures of the nation.

CHASS recommends further research to inform best practice in education and training in the creative arts. The Council recommends the Office of the Arts commissions a study mapping career pathways so as to define the narrative around the citizenship, other generic skills and 'public value' which creative arts education provides. Policy questions to guide the study should include 'how do career pathways work – from education and training to career and industry?' It is clear the portfolio funded entities such as, the National Institute of Dramatic Arts, have satisfactory career outcomes but greater economic benefit arises from post- secondary output in the creative arts and related disciplines. This study should include longitudinal data gained from graduate career destinations, graduate experience surveys, and interviews.

Recommendation 4: Ensure an inter-connection with the national curriculum process to provide for knowledge transfer and exchanges between university-based research and training in cultural and other relevant areas in the public, private and non-profit sectors.

5. The National Broadband Network and Cultural Policy

The NBN is a major technological achievement and will open up more opportunities for creativity and access to Australian cultural content with the potential for rural and regional Australia, in particular, to benefit greatly. The new Cultural Policy will need to:

- set the rules by which domestically produced Australian content is included in the NBN, who sees it and whether it is given priority over other global product;
- address how components of the cultural policy that deal with the NBN connect with the convergence review, and;
- connect with the national curriculum and clearly stipulate how and what Australian content is incorporated including guidance as to the sources from which to obtain it.

It is clear the NBN will enable a wider range of access to people Australia wide, thus expanding content distribution. For example, it will enable access to art museums around the world and enhance the availability of Australian content in our cultural institutions making Australian content more widely available to Australian consumers. The NBN also has the potential to reinvent and complement the traditional museum school visit and to extend access to it across the nation. As such CHASS recommends a national approach to co-ordinating and funding high-speed interactive content programs into the nations' schools using the expertise and collections of museums and historic sites.

Recommendation 5: Embed culture within the content development guidelines for the NBN to have the effect of bridging any cultural divide and will result in getting the most out of the NBN.

6. Funding Cultural Policy

The Mitchell Review of Private Sector Support for the Arts in Australia is currently underway to inform and feed into the Cultural Policy framework. The Council provided a submission to the review citing the *importance of continued public-private partnerships* for financial support as falling within the remit of a new National Cultural Policy so long as it is *not a substitute for Government support for the arts and culture*. This sentiment was echoed throughout the Council's workshop. This support was seen as having multiple purposes in also acting to strengthen emerging markets both here and overseas. Where large institutions are funded there must be sufficient operational funding to enable continued activity because these often had the effect of subsidising smaller, emerging products which are intrinsically connected to a people-centred identity.

Recommendation 6: Prioritise funding to enable connections between the arts, civic culture, media, industry and social policy.

The UK National Endowment for Science, Technology and the Arts (NESTA) is an independent body with a mission to 'make the UK more innovative'. It has an endowment status which means it can operate at no cost to the UK taxpayer. NESTA invests in early-stage companies, works to inform policy, and deliver practical programmes that inspire others to solve the big challenges of the future. NESTA forms partnerships with innovators, policymakers, community organisations, educators and other investors. The strength of these partnerships means the best ideas, new flows of capital and talented people are brought together. The NESTA model could be emulated in Australia. It brings closer together rationales for public investment across science and the arts based on a more rigorous notion of R&D that we have seen developed hitherto in Australia. It offers a model for investment rather than only grant-based activity in support of innovation in creative endeavour.

Recommendation 7: Develop innovative funding strategies

7. Nurturing World-class Talent

The third goal in the discussion paper reflects the aim of supporting excellence and world-class endeavour, to strengthen the role that arts plays in telling Australian stories both here and overseas. This soft diplomacy is Australian culture presented overseas, and there are strong benefits to our economy from doing so. The Council believes that as an element of cultural policy, arts policy should nurture world class talent and new work in the creative and performing arts through increased government support for strong institutions, in talent development, research, design and outreach into community-based and for-profit cultural work, and in building and engaging Australian audiences.

CHASS supports initiatives which are aimed at better connecting what Australia is doing in the arts with the Government's education revolution, with building skills and capabilities, with other mainstream policy initiatives such as Closing the Gap and the NBN but there is a risk from not investing in the implementation of these policies and relying upon informal networking to achieve the aim. The Council urges the government to address the risk to the Australian brand of not investing enough in Australia's cultural institutions.

Recommendation 8: CHASS strongly recommends properly funding programs for digitisation and the introduction of new technologies to ensure preservation of cultural heritage and allow for the collection and study of new and changing characteristics. The existing structures, programs and people involved in these areas simply require enhanced funding.

To better present Australian art and design internationally, the Council recommends formalising links with the agencies and structures already in existence such as Austrade which provides advice to exporters on prospective markets and opportunities, on-the-ground support in target countries, trade exhibitions, and assistance in finding potential investors. Austrade is the first national contact point for foreign investment inquiries and the officials work to actively promote Australia. Brand Australia is a four year \$20 million program to promote Australia's credentials as a global citizen, global business partner, and world class destination. The Council urges government to ensure their work is properly supported through augmentation to their budget annually and formal connection with the Office of the Arts on policy implementation.

Recommendation 9: CHASS recommends structures already in existence such as Austrade simply need to be funded further to enable exploration of new ideas, opportunities and markets.

New market success can be best illustrated with the Korean Art Fair 2011. The three year project was created out of collaboration between the Australia Council, Austrade, the Australian Commercial Galleries Association and the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade based on supporting the International Year of Friendship with Korea. The project included events and artist exchange where artists from Korea have come to Australia and Australian artists have gone to Korea. There are now seventeen galleries on show at the Korean art fair. This has created a solid base for Australian artists to create an international market for their work. This case study demonstrates what can be achieved through government support and cross agency support with a longer term view to showcasing Australian art.

Capitalising on successful international ventures is best illustrated with reference to the Artsource WA in the Middle East project where Artsource WA in a partnership with the Western Australian Trade Office in Dubai and Austrade in Doha received \$25,000 to promote Australian artists. This activity resulted in generating over \$1 million worth of contracts for Australian artists. The project was successful only because of the incredible energy of all those participating, and the one-off funding nature will not provide a sustainable source of income despite the successful outcome. The success of the Australian - Middle East art project would increase if there was a spread of government agencies contributing. The major risk to these initiatives achieving success is if the people involved ran out energy to drive the connections, follow up with opportunities and chase new ventures. These types of project will only survive, and will only be successful if they are planned, adequately resourced and engage with government.

8. Conclusion

Investing in a National Cultural Policy is about investing in the heart of our Australian identity and our way of life. A truly effective National Cultural Policy will be one that is integrated into programs in schools, local government, new media and longstanding media and infrastructure across all communities in Australia, and effect Australian economy and society by building upon the core activities in the arts and creative industries. It must enable coordination with other policies across education, arts and heritage and citizenship; to equally support creative industries and arts policy and effectively represent Australia's cultural institutions, including galleries and museums.

A ten year strategic framework to realise this vision will require whole-of-government support at the federal level, and support also from State and Territory Governments to be effective. as we have said, this will mean that government needs to articulate its priorities clearly, and justify rearrangements in funding and focus to deliver them. If the starting point for the development of a new National Cultural Policy for Australia is no new money, this means cutting red tape, and providing incentives for clever enterprise, and it also poses challenges for decision-makers to determine who within the framework receives government support.

To encourage investment and further innovation in industries and build upon the successful investment to-date in the arts institutions, training and research organisations and opportunities for cultural engagement, it will be important for this policy to not try and 're-invent the wheel'. It must be both realistic and practical in how it connects into the mainstream to both encourage commercially viable activities while also preserving those which are held as important to the character of Australian society.

CONTACTS:

President: Professor Sue Willis – president@chass.org.au

Executive Director: Ms Angela Magarry – director@chass.org.au