

November 2007

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1. A letter from the new Prime Minister

Kevin Rudd wrote to CHASS on Friday 23 November.

In response to my letter raising the importance of problem-driven research, Mr Rudd thanked CHASS for raising "important points about the potential for a coordinated and focussed approach to innovation".

He described his plans to establish a new Innovation Minister and Department of Innovation; and said "such a decision signifies Labor's commitment to reshape national innovation policy, to revisit our national research priorities and to reemphasise the importance of public benefit research."

Mr Rudd said he values the "breadth of Australian research effort across the humanities, arts and social sciences as well as scientific and technological disciplines."

It is a welcome sign of Labor's commitment that this detailed letter was sent so close to the election. I regard this as a very healthy indication that the humanities, arts and social sciences will indeed have a key part to play in the ALP's *Education Revolution*.

The [full text has been posted](#) to the CHASS web site.

2. What can we expect from the new government?

Labor made two specific funding promises in the university system: new fellowships for mid-career researchers, and a doubling of Australian Postgraduate Awards.

The Fellowships will pay researchers \$140,000 pa for four years, and include a one-off grant of \$50,000 for their institution. In a media release, I welcomed these announcements, but said we were disappointed that there was no new funding to tackle chronic problems in teaching and infrastructure.

Perhaps the ALP had to cut back on funding announcements because it was forced to match the Government's \$34 billion tax cuts, as announced in the first week of the campaign.

The two promises were set out in a media release from Senator Kim Carr then Shadow Minister for Innovation and Research . It also set out the next steps, Labor's plans for a "research revolution".

These steps address matters CHASS has raised. Labor plans for "encouraging cross-disciplinary and cross-institutional collaboration" addresses issues discussed in a CHASS report on collaborations. This report pointed out that funding and administrative silos made it hard for researchers to gain support for this potentially valuable work, and recommended a number of changes.

Senator Carr also said that an ALP Government will recognise "the value and breadth of Australian research effort across the humanities, arts and social sciences as well as scientific and technological disciplines." This is a welcome affirmation and signals that the new government will look to a more integrative approach to research policy.

3. The assessment of research

Labor announced it will abolish the Research Quality Framework (RQF), and replace it with "a new, streamlined, transparent, internationally verifiable system of research quality assessment, based on quality measures appropriate to each discipline. These measures will be developed in close consultation with the research community."

I have written to Senator Carr to offer our willingness to be involved in the "close consultation". Our interest in these matters has extended over three years, and the experience will be useful in helping frame a new system of research quality assessment. I said that that we have already alerted key stakeholders to the work that needs to be done. CHASS stands ready to facilitate government consultation with the HASS sector.

4. And what to expect in Arts?

Peter Garrett released a "comprehensive arts policy framework, *New Directions for the Arts*", ten days before the election.

It sets out Labor's intentions in regard to a resale royalty scheme, the improved provision of arts and music education in schools, and a review of the current state of artists' incomes called ArtStart, among other matters.

The policy also commits Labor to the development of "a *Strategic Digital Industry Plan*, engaging with the digital sector in the areas of IP, government procurement and export and innovation." At

least one of Labor's proposed innovation centres will be based in the creative industries, an initiative worth \$17 million.

Mr Garrett reminded us that Labor is "committed to world-class telecommunications infrastructure and will invest up to \$4.7 billion to establish the National Broadband Network in partnership with the private sector."

The [release announcing the policy](#) is on the CHASS web site, along with a link to the full statement in *New Directions for the Arts*.

5. Visit by Philip Esler

CHASS hosted Professor Philip Esler, Chief Executive of the Arts and Humanities Research Council (AHRC) in the UK, for a series of discussions in Canberra 10 days ago. Professor Esler met with representatives of peak councils, government departments and cultural institutions.

As well as leading the AHRC, he also acts on behalf of all seven Research Councils (representing about 3 billion pounds of investment per annum) in championing their joint knowledge transfer and economic impact program. He recently released a [progress report on this issue](#): see CHASS web site for *Excellence with Impact*.

Professor Esler said that the Research Assessment Exercise (RAE) in the UK has had a positive effect. Initially designed as a measure to demonstrate the value of research against threats to strip funding out of the sector 20 years ago, it is his view that the RAE has increased the productivity of Britain's researchers.

He is now involved in discussions in the UK, as the Government there prepares to move from a heavily-qualitative system to a lighter version more firmly based on metrics, and one more in accord with Labor's publicly-stated position. His experiences will be useful in the Australian context.

(And our thanks to the new New Zealand Academy of the Humanities, who arranged his visit to Australasia.)

6. CHASS website: New features

All CHASS Members can now post information about their events, and advertise conferences, seminars and job vacancies on our web site.

All notices will be listed in chronological order under "Events", with the top event appearing on our home page until it has been held.

We also have a space for "Article of the Day". This lists an item of outstanding interest to our subscribers, with a link to the full article. We invite all readers to nominate articles for this space. Just send an outline and web address to our director, Toss Gascoigne at: [director \[at\] chass.org.au](mailto:director@chass.org.au). All contributions listed will be gratefully acknowledged.

7. DASSH Deans take up CHASS office

The Deans of Humanities, Arts and Social Sciences are one of the key supporters of CHASS. I am delighted to announce that they will soon base their operations from an office in the CHASS suite, as soon as they appoint their new Executive Officer.

8. CHASS membership expands

I would like to welcome a number of new Members:

- Macquarie University
- Edith Cowan University
- Design and Social Context, RMIT
- Faculty of Arts, Charles Sturt University
- Centre of Peace and Social Justice, SCU
- Currency House Inc.
- Institute of Australian Geographers

Any organisation interested in supporting our efforts is welcome to join CHASS. We have a variety of [membership](#) levels, with annual subscriptions ranging from \$220 to \$8,800. Please speak to Gemma Black, Membership Liaison Officer on 02 6201 5996; or see our web site.

RegardsStuart Cunningham

27 November 2007

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