

## CHASS NEWS

Council for the Humanities, Arts and Social Sciences

20 November 2009

### **Wicked as**

At HASS on the Hill Australia's Chief Scientist called for collaborative research and teams to tackle the "wicked problems" which confront Australia.

Professor Penny Sackett defines these as "problems which cannot be objectively defined and cannot be solved by trial-and-error, because attempting any solution can cause irreversible impacts on that system".

Climate change is the obvious "wicked" challenge but increasingly Governments and commercial and non profit industries find themselves facing complex systems and issues which escape tried and true problem solving methods - outside the "tame" problems which academic and policy researchers have resources and discipline based methodologies to tackle.

Many of the CHASS member organisations are engaged in energetic discussion about how they can contribute to meet these challenges whether in urban planning or strengthening social cohesion and adaptation to the global world of on-line connectivity.

This month RMIT's Design Research Institute hosted a symposium on Designing Solutions to Wicked Problems where designers, humanists and scientists looked at how best to work together on solutions. Some of the most fruitful discussion came as architects and CSIRO team leaders compared their ways of working and managing projects while other researchers called for opportunities for dissent and debate to stimulate new approaches.

The President of the Australian Academy of Humanities, Professor Ian Donaldson, this week called for humanities researchers to work with scientists to encourage holistic rather than sectoral knowledge, and at the Academy of Social Sciences in Australia, fellows recently reviewed the new technologies in data management and mapping. These allow researchers to report human and social conditions at a specific place and location while also building their capabilities in mapping "big picture" sets of data - offering new insights into how Australian society works and its people interact.

Often this new complexity can be captured through the creative arts. The Super Human exhibition in Melbourne highlights collaborations between artists and scientists looking at what it means to be human, 150 years after the publication of Charles Darwin's *The Origin of Species*.

There is frank acknowledgement that we have much work to do to deal with wicked problems, however urgent and whatever pressure there is to come up with quick answers and simple solutions.

In research policy the Australian Research Council is aware it is dealing with more proposals that cross disciplinary boundaries, and wants to ensure its evaluation of these new proposals is both rigorous and understanding of their potential. Researchers are also seeking to discover a common language which still is rich and complex enough to allow disciplinary experts to use and communicate their specialised knowledge and skills.

2010 will be an important time of connection and collaboration as we work from ideas of multi disciplinary teams to transdisciplinary research outcomes.

Helen O'Neil

Executive Director

Council for the Humanities, Arts and Social Sciences

*20 November 2009*



### **HASS on the Hill update**

HASS on the Hill was an exciting 2 days in the nation's capital. Delegates gave us the thumbs up with the smooth running of the event and thanked "CHASS for a very stimulating and productive experience", although some were disappointed their meetings with MPs and Senators were cancelled because of pressures of Parliamentary business. Overall we had great feedback and some good ideas for future development and growth of HASS on the Hill. [Highlights from the event.](#)

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### **CHASS board**

CHASS welcomes [new board members](#) Mr Michael Crayford, Professor Sue Willis and Professor Faith Trent AM FACE.

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### **Challenges ahead**

Researchers, politicians and policy makers engaged in a lively and mutually beneficial debate on English language policy and support for Indigenous students and for child and adult immigrants - [outcomes](#) of the *Languages and cultural awareness* roundtable.

They were also engaged in an energetic discussion on how to create capable students so Australia can meet the targets for social inclusion set for 2020. The roundtable will lead to a significant brief on relevant research to Government policy-makers - [outcomes](#) of the *Social inclusion in education* roundtable.

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### **Research Workforce Strategy**

A second round of meetings are now underway to track progress on developing the [Research Workforce Strategy](#).

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### **ARC Peer Review Process**

CHASS made a [submission](#) on the ARC Peer Review Process. Also read Council's [background overview](#) of the process.

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### **New R&D Tax Incentive**

CHASS [submitted a response](#) to the new R&D Tax Incentive consultation paper.

### **HASS at a glance**

#### **Calendar of events**

CHASS member organisations can upload their events on the Council's website - a great opportunity to spread the word across the nation. The [calendar](#) is highlighted in CHASS News which goes out to over 1,500 subscribers.

#### **National Cultural Policy**

In his speech at the CHASS National Press Club address the Arts Minister launched [a new web forum](#) to open dialogue on a national cultural policy. Discussions are raging ...

#### **ASSA Fellows**

The Academy welcomes 19 elected [Fellows](#) in 2009.

#### **Top nanotechnologist speaks at Super Human exhibition**

Dr Amanda Barnard, recipient of the 2009 Malcolm McIntosh Prize for Physical Scientist of the Year, will present the [address](#) at the artists' reception for the Super Human: Revolution of the Species exhibition at RMIT Gallery.

#### **CCI researchers**

Eating and socialising online - five [CCI researchers](#) were successful in the latest round of Australian Research Council grants.

### **Cyber sticks and stones**

What happens when schoolyard name-calling progresses into online harassment? With today's adolescents now taking bullying into cyberspace, researchers are seeking ways to combat the growing issue of cyberbullying. [UTS Marketing and Communication Unit](#).

### **University of Western Australia**

Professor Simon Anderson, who has taught at The University of Western Australia for the past 20 years, has been [appointed](#) to lead the University's Faculty of Architecture, Landscape and Visual Arts as its Dean.

Professor Ted Snell - artist, arts academic, curator and reviewer - has been [appointed](#) as Director of The University of Western Australia's new Cultural Precinct.

Council for the Humanities, Arts and Social Sciences  
Room 11B7, Building 11  
University of Canberra ACT 2617

Tel: +61 .2 62012740  
Fax: +61 .2 62012132  
director [at] chass.org.au