



CHASS submission: "Building University Diversity"

Fifteen years ago, with the creation of a national and unified system of higher education, many self-standing colleges dedicated to the creative arts were merged into the university system. Fifteen years on, it is not clear that this was, in total, of benefit to education, research or professional practice in the creative arts in Australia.

One of the terms of reference of the current "Building University Diversity" debate, launched by Minister Nelson's discussion paper of March 2005, concerns the role of specialist institutions within the Australian higher education, system. CHASS advocates that a re-examination of the desirability, or otherwise, of some specialist universities dedicated to the creative arts – including such fields as music, art, design, dance, drama, communications studies, digital arts, multi-arts and fusion arts -- needs to be included within this current debate.

Overseas experience suggests that creative arts can flourish within separate institutions, while also occurring as part of comprehensive universities.

* The UK maintains within its university system some separate art schools and music schools – such as the Royal School of Art, and the Royal Academy of Music – and has recently brought five art, design, fashion and communication colleges together to form the University of the Arts London (www.arts.ac.uk). Other UK examples include:

Laban Centre for Dance (<http://www.laban.org/>)

Glasgow School of Art (www.gsa.ac.uk/)

Dartington College of Arts (www.dartington.ac.uk/)

* Within a university system comparable to Australia's, Austria includes the Vienna University of Applied Arts and the Vienna University of Music and Performing Arts.

* Japan includes among its universities the Tokyo National University of Fine Arts and Music (www.geidai.ac.jp/english).

* Korea establishes the National University of the Arts

* The United States recognizes many specialist music and art schools among its doctoral-degree-granting bodies, such as the Juilliard School of Music in New York, CalArts in California, the Rhode Island School of Design, the University of the Arts in Philadelphia, and the School of the Art Institute of Chicago.

Fifteen years after those Australian separate institutions were merged into the university system, the greatest enduring concern is that the specific needs of inculcation and development of creative practices gain insufficient recognition within a comprehensive approach to education and research. In short, the artist's studio does not find, within a comprehensive university system, a similar recognition to the humanist's library or the scientist's lab. "Creative work" still fits awkwardly within university concepts of research or mass education. A 1998 DEETYA report (Strand, *Research in the Creative Arts*) observed that while then containing nearly 5 per cent of Australian university staff and students, the creative arts sector was gaining under 1 per cent of competitive research funding. (Since then, the creative arts sector has

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grown to around 8 per cent of the Australian university population, and the issue remains unresolved.)

Similarly, education in the creative arts, once funded on the specific needs of that art form and often in separate institutions, has been shoe-horned into one undifferentiated cluster, and equated with the teaching of foreign languages. This has placed huge pressures upon those institutions that have attempted to maintain an adequate tuition for individual students.

Fifteen years after the mergers, some areas of the creative arts have done well. They have taken up fundamentally new directions (such as creative industries), found happy synergies with developing technological or educational directions of their universities, or grasped new opportunities offered through research linkages to other disciplines. Their students have taken up the opportunity of combined degrees, or cross-faculty majors, both within the creative arts (art/music) and more broadly (as with art/business or IT/music combinations).

But many creative-arts areas, despite a burgeoning student demand, have struggled to maintain traditional studio practice of teaching and the production of art works/performances of quality. The 2005 Review of Orchestras commented:

"An issue frequently raised during the review's consultations related to the training of musicians for employment in the professional orchestras. A common view was that much of the music training currently provided in Australian universities is either unbalanced or inappropriate, and that this adds to the difficulties faced by many music graduates in securing employment with the professional orchestras. The review has not attempted to form its own judgements in this area, but believes that the issues raised warrant consideration by government."

(www.dcita.gov.au/arts/councils/orchestras_review_2005)

CHASS advocates that a re-examination of the placement of creative arts higher education within comprehensive or within specialist institutions, or both, should look at a wide range of issues, including:

- student demand
- the development of new and more accurate measurements of graduate outcomes
- educational, research and creative-work needs of specific art forms and interdisciplines
- employment prospects and needed skill sets
- management practices and accountabilities
- community expectations

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