AAH Policy

PRE-BUDGET SUBMISSION
31 JANUARY 2020

Introduction

The Australian Academy of the Humanities (AAH) is the peak body for the humanities in Australia. Our 640-strong Fellowship are recognised experts in the humanities disciplines spanning culture, arts, history, languages, linguistics, literature, media and communications, philosophy and ethics, religion, archaeology, and heritage.

Since its establishment in 1969, the Academy has drawn upon the expertise of its Fellowship to facilitate important – and often challenging – national conversations about our shared values, our past, and our visions for the future. It is this deep understanding of human experience that must continue to inform Australia's policy agendas in the years ahead.

The Academy works collaboratively with the other Learned Academies through the Australian Council of Learned Academies (ACOLA) on joint research projects commissioned via the Office of the Chief Scientist, and through other government departments and agencies. The Academy undertakes research on the capability and capacity in the humanities, arts and social sciences, including Mapping the Humanities Arts and Social Sciences in Australia (2014) and Future Humanities Workforce (forthcoming). We are the lead delivery partner for A New Approach (ANA), an independent think tank championing effective investment and return in Australian arts and culture under a program funded by The Myer Foundation, the Tim Fairfax Family Foundation and the Keir Foundation.

The Academy's 8-Point Plan to Humanise the Future

This Pre-Budget submission draws from the Academy's 8-Point Plan to Humanise the Future:

1. Ensure ethical, historical and cultural expertise informs all government agendas

2. Abandon the siloed approach to policy-making which separates science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM) from the humanities, arts and social sciences (HASS)

3. Review the design and effectiveness of publicly-funded schemes for HASS research

4. Return the $4.2M stripped from ARC research funding to the humanities

5. Expedite infrastructure investment to drive technological innovation for the HASS sector

6. Incorporate creative, cultural and digital sectors in industry development programs

7. Invest in intercultural capability through comprehensive language education

8. Develop clearer national policy settings to guide investment in a culturally confident Australia.

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The Academy acknowledges that recent bushfire and environmental crises will necessarily draw on significant public resources to assist individuals and communities devastated by these events.

Our Pre-Budget submission has been prepared with this tight funding climate in view, presenting practical proposals to harness the expertise of Australia's humanities, arts and culture sector across a broad range of policy areas that could achieve immediate impact and are designed to be a cost-effective application of resources, most of which are largely cost-neutral. This sets the foundation for a strong and responsive humanities, arts and cultural sector – positioned to contribute to Australia's future and its place in the region and the world.

Summary of recommendations:

1. **Establish a mechanism to bring ethical, cultural, historical and creative expertise to policy development and to government:**

   a. At least two of the research experts on the National Science and Technology Council (NSTC) are drawn from cultural, social or creative fields, ensuring that science advice is complemented by cultural and social research expertise leading to more effective policy-making.

   b. Establish a cross-portfolio policy inquiry, modelled on the APS200 projects, to investigate how best to bring ethical, cultural, historical, social and creative expertise to policy development in the public service and in advice to government.

2. **Build Australia's cultural, social and historical research capability:**

   a. For the Australian Research Council (ARC) to consult with researchers in the HASS fields on the current range of programs and evaluation and assessment processes.

   b. Build flexibility into ARC grant schemes. Moving on from the one-size-fits all model for research grants, including in applications for the ARC Centres of Excellence scheme, will help ensure that the aspirations of the entire sector are better served.

   c. Alleviate pressure on the ARC grant system by developing an Expression of Interest process

3. **Broaden the Science in Australia Gender Equity (SAGE) program to the humanities, arts and social sciences (HASS) fields to act on gender equity and workforce diversity across the research sector:**

   a. Engage with SAGE program leaders across Australia and the Australian Academy of the Humanities and the Academy of Social Sciences in Australia for advice on design and implementation of a sector-wide program.

4. **Adopt new settings for Australian knowledge diplomacy in the region. As a first step, utilise the mechanism of the new National Foundation for Australia-China Relations to:**

   a. Undertake a review into Australia's research and training capacity in China studies

   b. Support Chinese-Australian/community-to-community engagement in arts and culture

   c. Support building independent Chinese-Australian business and professional networks as a national resource for business and government dealing with China.

5. **To strengthen and diversify Australia's industrial base and maximise the potential of our creative, cultural and digital sectors:**

   a. Establish an Independent Review of the Creative and Cultural Industries.

1. Establish a mechanism to bring ethical, cultural, historical and creative expertise to policy development and to government

A human-centred approach to policy-making requires government agendas to be informed by ethical, historical, creative and cultural expertise.

The Chief Scientist model has been extremely effective in providing advice on science issues. A formal mechanism is needed to provide a conduit to government for cultural and social expertise – one that coordinates and connects with science-based advice.

Problems that have often been seen as purely scientific or material or environmental are now more readily understood as fundamentally human and cultural. We recommend in the strongest possible terms utilising trusted humanities institutions and expertise to help identify and characterise the current problems facing our nation, and to begin working towards solutions.

A case in point is the policy response to bushfire resilience and recovery. The Government, through its highest advisory bodies, needs to be able to draw on up-to-the-minute, comprehensive advice from across the research sector. Humanities, arts and cultural research, with its deep understanding of human experience and knowledge and its detailed attention to locality, ecology and history, can make a significant contribution to the way in which communities not only rebuild in the wake of disaster but also in equipping Australians with the skills, knowledge and confidence they will need to deal with future crises, which are inevitable given the new challenges created by climate change.

Ensuring that the scientific and technical advice is heard in concert with evidence from cultural and social researchers will ensure the most effective solutions and approaches are developed for Australian communities and individuals so devastated by these and other catastrophic events.

Government are already investing in the skills, knowledge and capabilities of the humanities, arts and social sciences through education and research programs. Drawing on the expertise in more effective ways makes good public policy sense.

AAH recommends using the effective approaches and mechanisms for bringing science advice into policy-making as a model for ensuring that government can draw on expertise across the research system, thereby more fully utilising the expertise government itself invests in through the research and education system. We propose:

- That at least two of the research sector experts on the National Science and Technology Council (NSTC) are drawn from cultural, social or creative fields, ensuring that science advice is complemented by cultural and social research expertise leading to more effective policy-making.

- Establish a cross-portfolio policy inquiry, modelled on the APS200 projects, to investigate how best to bring ethical, cultural, historical, social and creative expertise to policy development in the public service and to government.

Portfolio leads: Education, and Industry, Science and Innovation

Cost: Bolstering expertise on NSTC is cost neutral; $400,000 for cross-portfolio policy inquiry.

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2. Build Australia's cultural, social and historical research capability

The skills and knowledge of the humanities, arts and culture sector is increasingly recognised by industry leaders and the science and technology peak bodies as central to addressing humanity's greatest challenges. The humanities, arts and culture sector in Australia, however, finds itself under serious stress from declining government investment and policy neglect.

In contrast to the STEM disciplines, there is no map of areas of strategic need or capacity for the other half of the research system, and no plan for addressing capability gaps or areas requiring investment in the national interest. Also missing is an overarching strategy for the research system as a whole, which would encourage greater connection between HASS and STEM.

The lack of funding and policy direction has reduced incentives for universities themselves to invest in the HASS disciplines. The latest Excellence in Research for Australia results paint a stark picture of the growing divide in capacity between STEM and HASS.

In this context, the recent announcement of a Special Research Initiative – a $12M investment from existing Australian Research Council funding – to support research into Australian culture, history, and society is a very welcome signal that the government values the leading role played by humanities researchers in helping to address vital questions about who we are as a nation, and what we might aspire to be.

This is a significant first step in building capacity in a specific sub-set of the humanities, but there is more to be done. As outlined in our submission to the Parliamentary Inquiry into Australia's Research Funding, there are cost-effective ways to achieve more balance and equitable resourcing across the ARC's programs.[1] A differential funding approach (across disciplines and according to cost) would allow more grants of smaller amounts to be awarded, while maintaining the ability of researchers with large scale projects to benefit from access to current program level funding.

Urgently addressing the high volume of ARC applications is another way to secure productivity savings – across administration, application and assessment phases. Success rates for ARC schemes are currently sitting at around 20 percent. The extraordinary cost of preparing and submitting applications for research funding is well-documented; the burden on the sector of the assessment process has received less attention. An Expression of Interest process within universities should be developed, with the goal of reducing the number of applications by half, thereby increasing overall success rates and alleviating current pressures on the system.

Finally, we recommend a focused process by which the ARC would engage with leading researchers across the disciplines in order to hear their views on whether the current range of programs, evaluation and assessment processes are fit for purpose.

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[1] Australian Academy of the Humanities (2018) Submission to the Parliamentary Inquiry into Australia's Research Funding, https://www.humanities.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2018/07/AAH-Policy-2018-Inquiry-in-Funding-Australias-Research.pdf

> **AAH recommends a review of the design and effectiveness of publicly-funded schemes for HASS research. We propose that this could take effect across the ARC's programs in the first instance:**
>
> - Institute a process for consultation with research leaders on the current range of programs and evaluation and assessment processes.
>
> - Build flexibility into ARC grant schemes. Moving on from the one-size-fits all model for research grants, including in applications for the ARC Centres of Excellence scheme, will help ensure that the aspirations of the entire sector are better served.
>
> - Alleviate pressure on the ARC grant system by developing an Expression of Interest process
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> **Portfolio lead:** Education; Australian Research Council
>
> **Cost:** $100,000 for consultation process.

3. Broaden the SAGE program to the HASS fields to act on gender equity and workforce diversity across the research sector

Achieving gender equity and workforce diversity are critical for the future of the Australian research sector.

There are a number of policy and institutional initiatives in STEM fields seeking to address current imbalances, with the SAGE Athena SWAN program an especially prominent feature of this effort. This approach has largely been at the expense of addressing gender inequities and systemic bias evident across the research sector.

Research conducted by our Academy as part of its ARC-funded Future Humanities Workforce project shows that there are STEM disciplines which share a common gender profile with HASS fields: fields such as philosophy and economics exhibit pronounced gender disparity from the start of the 'pipeline' right through to senior levels; whereas the allied health domain, for example, profile looks much like some HASS fields, with an over-representation of women in the workforce overall but a stark underrepresentation in leadership positions. Our research shows that despite seemingly positive gender equity numbers in a particular discipline or at an institution, complex structural and cultural issues may continue to perpetuate inequities and contribute to women being "squeezed out" of the research system.[2]

In the Academy's response to the ARC's consultation on Increasing the Diversity of Australia's Research Workforce, we proposed drawing from international exemplars and taking a more holistic approach to addressing gender inequities that we also recommend to the Government.[3] Most notably, in many other jurisdictions including Britain and Canada, the Athena Swan program has been extended to the entire research sector. Some Australian universities have already adopted a whole-of-system approach to their data collection and strategy. It is a necessary and smart next step for SAGE to formally shift gear for Gender Equity in Australian Research.

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[2] Australian Academy of the Humanities (2019), Future Humanities Workforce project,
[3] Australian Academy of the Humanities (2019), Increasing the Diversity of Australia's Research Workforce, https://www.humanities.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2019/12/AAH-Policy-2019-ARC-Gender-Equality.pdf

> **The AAH recommends that the SAGE (Athena SWAN) initiative be extended across the research system. This will require the SAGE initiative to:**
>
> - Engage with the Academy of the Humanities and the Academy of Social Sciences in Australia for advice on design and implementation of a sector-wide program.
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> **Portfolio lead:** Industry, Science and Innovation
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> **Cost:** To be determined.

4. Adopt new settings for Australian knowledge diplomacy in the region

Efforts to strengthen international relations are today more important than ever. Our geographic region is made up of a significant number of countries, many of which have very different historical and cultural backgrounds, and different core values. As globalisation has made transnational connections much more prevalent, it is vital that we understand and work effectively with our international neighbours.

An important focus for knowledge diplomacy in the 21st century is the need for international research collaboration in addressing challenges that cross national borders, such as climate change, infectious diseases, ageing populations, or cybersecurity. Working on shared challenges will provide a strong basis for contributing to, and building up, regional relations. This will require multidisciplinary initiatives involving HASS and STEM. Australia does not have funding schemes and programs directed at building this interdisciplinary effort.

There is need to bring humanities, arts and cultural expertise to bear on Australia's diplomatic relationships across Asia and the Pacific.

An immediate application of a knowledge diplomacy approach with one important relationship exists through the establishment of the new National Foundation for Australia-China Relations.

> **To support Australia's research and training capability and readiness to engage in the region, AAH recommends:**
>
> - Undertake a review into Australia's research and training capacity in China studies
>
> - Support for Chinese-Australian/community-to-community engagement in arts and culture
>
> - Support for building independent Chinese-Australian business and professional networks as a national resource for business and government dealing with China.
>
> **Portfolio lead:** Foreign Affairs and Trade, in liaison with Education and Industry, Science and Innovation
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> **Cost:** To be determined, in scope of the new National Foundation for Australia-China Relations.

5. Incorporate creative, cultural and digital sectors in industry development programs

In 2016-17, the contribution from cultural and creative activity in Australia grew to $111.7 billion – 6.4 per cent of GDP. Other countries are investing heavily and planning for the development of these industries, yet in Australia there is under-recognition of their potential to contribute to our cultural and economic future.

A 2017 OECD report found that Australia's innovation skills remain weak, recommending that Government widen "the scope of subsidies for innovation-related subjects beyond STEM".[4] We need to firmly embed the HASS disciplines in our future vision for the nation, remove barriers to their participation, and include emerging industries in industry development incentive programs, such as the Industry Growth Centres, Industrial Transformation Scheme and Cooperative Research Centres Program where HASS research can contribute to areas of public good, growth and competitive advantage for Australia.

Australia also has an opportunity to be a world leader in bringing together cutting-edge research in the humanities and emerging digital industries to help address some of the most urgent challenges facing these industries today: namely trust, transparency, equity, and the integrity of the political system.

We also acknowledge the central role that galleries, libraries, archives and museums (GLAM) play in the digital and cultural economy. The GLAM sector in Australia are leaders in the implementation of digital technologies to facilitate broad access to collections for educational, professional and academic research, and social interest purposes. There is substantial evidence that arts and culture institutions are critical to a nation's wellbeing outcomes, community cohesiveness, and sense of shared identity.

The Academy recommends undertaking an Independent Review of the Creative and Cultural Industries tasked with outlining key recommendations for how these sectors can underpin Australia's future economic growth and more effectively resource and harness our social and cultural expertise for the nation. Such a review was undertaken in the UK in 2017 and provided a framework for the UK's future industrial strategy.[5]

To strengthen and diversify Australia's industrial base and maximise the potential of our creative, cultural and digital sectors, AAH recommends:

- An Independent Review of the Creative and Culture Industries.

Portfolio lead: Industry, Science and Innovation, and Department of Infrastructure

Cost: $500,000 (estimate)

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[4] OECD (2017), Economic Surveys: Australia, https://www.oecd-ilibrary.org/docserver/eco_surveys-aus-2017-en.pdf?expires=1580443232&id=id&accname=ocid194734&checksum=DA872CC5110DE423255641E33784F4E1, p.18

[5] UK Government (2017), Independent Review of the Creative Industries, https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/independent-review-of-the-creative-industries