

AUSTRALIA COUNCIL FOR THE ARTS CREATIVE INNOVATION STRATEGY

Creativity is vital in the worldwide shift to innovation and knowledge-based economies. Creativity underpins new concepts and forms, often linking seemingly disparate ideas. It is a central component of innovation—which frequently entails the *implementation* of creative ideas, the incorporation of novel ideas into practical use—and is increasingly important to Australia’s future as an innovative, progressive and prosperous nation.

Australian artists and creative practitioners, working across tertiary, not-for-profit, and commercial sectors in Australia and elsewhere, play a vital role in enhancing and growing Australia’s innovation economy. They are the ‘core producers’ of our high-growth creative industries.

Collaborative, cross-disciplinary practice and research—the hallmarks of much artistic practice today—is an important prerequisite for solving complex issues, and provides a foundation for new scientific discovery, and knowledge and wealth creation.

The Australia Council’s **Creative Innovation Strategy** is a coordinated approach to supporting creativity as one of Australia’s most valuable assets.

The Strategy identifies and clarifies the many initiatives supported by the Council that enhance Australian creativity and build pathways to successful innovation, spanning creative skills, enterprise and leadership. These initiatives are a solid basis from which to build future partnerships across government portfolios, industry and research sectors.

The Australian Government believes the innovation- and knowledge-based economies are a priority and it is currently investigating ways to accelerate enterprise development and innovation through three key mechanisms:

- A Digital Content Strategy, which includes a Digital Content Industry Action Agenda (DCIAA), to accelerate the production, distribution and marketing of digital content and applications domestically and internationally
- The Prime Minister’s Science, Engineering and Innovation Council (PMSEIC) Working Group to examine *The Role of Creativity in the Innovation Economy*
- The National Broadband Strategy and Implementation Group.

The Australia Council believes its Creative Innovation Strategy can help to address the changing dynamics of our growing creative industries.

Today’s artists and creative practitioners are increasingly looking to governments and cultural agencies, such as the Australia Council, to move beyond ‘grant giving’, to find new ways to help them earn income through their creative enterprises, and ensure their long-term viability.

At the same time, Australian business is looking for more innovative systems and products to gain a competitive edge; this leads increasingly to a multidisciplinary approach, drawing on talents and new works emerging from the social sciences, humanities and arts.

Through its Creative Innovation Strategy, the Australia Council aims to play a vital role in Australia's innovation economy. The core objectives of the Strategy are to:

- Nourish a climate of creativity through direct and indirect support for artists, creative practitioners and organisations
- Establish and grow new partnerships and pathways between artists and creative practitioners and organisations, government, cultural agencies and industry, both nationally and internationally
- Add value to the Australian Government's investment in skills and education, digital content and technology innovation, regional sustainability, trade and industry development.

In meeting these objectives the Australia Council wants to engage a broad range of partners and stakeholders across government, the tertiary sector and industry.

The Strategy comprises four key components built on an 'innovation value chain' that begins with supporting pathways for creators and leads to commercialisation and innovation in new works:

1. *Creative Schools*: Promoting arts education in schools
2. *Synapse Research*: A cross-disciplinary research framework
3. *Creative Leadership*: Developing creative leaders and international exchange
4. *Create + Accelerate*: Support for creative enterprise and innovation

FOUR KEY COMPONENTS OF THE CREATIVE INNOVATION STRATEGY

1. Creative Schools: Promoting arts education in schools

There are major implications for education when we acknowledge the ability to innovate as one of the key capabilities of the knowledge economy, for individuals and communities. New ways of generating, distributing and applying knowledge are transforming what students need to learn, and what we need and expect from education.

The arts have a big role to play in contributing to the development of a culture of innovation in schools and other educational settings.¹

Schools are faced with the challenge of finding new ways to cater to the diverse interests and learning styles of individual students, and more creative means of educating students to reach their potential and meet the needs of the knowledge economy.

Learning in and through the arts can help schools meet the innovation challenge. A systemic approach is needed for:

- curriculum and teaching methods in the arts and other subject areas
- professional development and training for educators and artists
- finding and testing new ways for schools to connect with arts and creative organisations to engage children and young people in their own learning.

The Australia Council has led the call for greater commitment to strengthening the links between education and the arts in Australia. A number of nationally and internationally significant initiatives in which the Council is involved have the potential to create unprecedented opportunities for artists, educators and students in Australia.

The Council is working with the Cultural Ministers Council and the Ministerial Council for Education, Employment, Training and Youth Affairs to develop a National Statement on Education and the Arts. To be released in early 2006, the statement acknowledges that our future prosperity demands a well-informed and active citizenry, consisting of individuals able to communicate well, think originally and critically, adapt to change, work cooperatively, connect with both people and ideas, and find solutions to problems as they occur.²

Recent Council research demonstrates that school-based arts participation contributes to developing these very abilities in students.³

We also know that good quality arts education partnerships improve student attitudes to learning and contribute to better quality teaching and school leadership.

¹ Discussion Paper: Young People, Schools and Innovation: towards an action plan for the school sector, Committee for the Review of Teaching and Teacher Education March 2003

² Information Statement, 18th MCEETYA meeting, 12-13 May 2005 Canberra

³ Education and the Arts Research Overview Australia Council September 2005

The Australia Council has undertaken significant work in this area; some of the initiatives we have supported are:

- Hosting two preparatory events for the UNESCO World Conference on Arts Education in 2006 – *Backing our Creativity* national symposium and *International Mini-summit on Education and the Arts*
- Management of the National Review of Education in Visual Arts, Craft, Design and Visual Communication, co-funded by DEST
- Provision of advice through the steering committee for the National Review of School Music Education, funded by DEST
- Co-commissioning of a global compendium on arts education in partnership with the International Federation of Arts Councils and Cultural Agencies (IFACCA) and UNESCO
- Provision of ongoing coordination and secretariat for the National Education and Arts Network
- Production of a national overview of recent research on the impact of arts participation on student learning and development
- Establishment of a directory of arts companies currently providing educational programs and activities for schools
- Development of a pilot arts education program for remote communities in northern Australia, beginning in 2006
- Partnerships with the Centre of Excellence in Creative Industries and Innovation (Queensland University of Technology) to enhance research methodologies and determine future priorities for education and the arts.

The Creative Innovation Strategy is a platform for the Australia Council to grow the value of its work through partnerships with an increased number of stakeholders in 2006 and beyond.

2. Synapse Research: A Cross-Disciplinary Research Framework

The transfer of specialist knowledge and skills across disciplines is vital for generating new ideas, products and services.

In the sciences, the adoption of cross-disciplinary approaches to discovery and innovation has given rise to important new fields such as bioengineering and nanobiotechnology. The role of cross-disciplinary approaches to practice and discovery is no less important in the creative arts.

Artists have been practising at the edges of their artforms for centuries, and it is this ability to work across specialist fields, to address complexity and to find new answers to old questions, that is generating interest in the role of creativity in innovation. The same spirit of critical enquiry now sees a growing number of artists investigating and translating their creative practice using research-based methodologies—what is now termed ‘practice-based research’.

In our universities and colleges, however, the value and impact of research in the arts remains poorly understood. In particular, applications for Australian Research Council (ARC) competitive grants in the area of Creative Arts suffer from very low success rates compared to other disciplines, partly because measures of value and output do not adequately capture creative works, and instead favour text-based mediums, such as journal citations.

The Australian Government has demonstrated its interest in creating more effective mechanisms for cross-disciplinary research and practice through the PMSEIC Inquiry into The Role of Creativity in the Innovation Economy. In this context the Australia Council has been acknowledged for taking a leadership role by establishing a comprehensive and coordinated approach to arts/science collaboration via its Synapse Art and Science Strategy.

A memorandum of understanding with the ARC enables the two agencies to work together to support innovation in areas where Australia can be globally competitive and deliver benefits to the community. Through its relationship with the ARC and other key organisations, such as the Council for Humanities Arts and Social Sciences (CHASS), the Australia Council will build research capability in the arts and grow recognition and investment in emerging, cross-disciplinary areas of creative practice.

Synapse: A Cross-Disciplinary Research Framework

The objective of the Synapse⁴ program is to encourage creative and experimental collaborations between creative practitioners and scientists through:

- Australian Research Council Linkage Grant Industry Partnerships
- Synapse Residencies
- Synapse Database.

Critical to the success of Synapse has been the involvement of a range of key stakeholders, including the ARC, the Australian Network for Art and Technology (ANAT) and the Commonwealth Scientific and Industrial Research Organisation (CSIRO).

⁴ See http://www.ozco.gov.au/grants/other_support_new_media_arts/synapse/

The Australia Council's **Synapse Research** framework will promote and grow existing support for research in the creative arts and improve research capability in cross-disciplinary areas. It will heighten awareness across the government, tertiary and industry sectors of the value and impacts of creative practice and arts-based research.

Considering the Council's ongoing support for cross-disciplinary research and practice, **Synapse Research** has the following priorities:

1. *Increased support for cross-disciplinary creative practice*
 - a. The Council's Inter-Arts Office will extend the existing Synapse program to encourage creative interdisciplinary practice across artform areas, supporting ARC Linkage applications in other areas of emergent, cross-disciplinary practice (such as design/manufacturing)
 - b. The Council will work with stakeholders, including the ARC and CHASS, to improve the quality and scale of ARC Linkage applications in the creative arts.
2. *Improved research capability in the arts*
 - a. Improve the evidence-base—identify best practice methodologies for evidence-based research across arts/education, arts/health and arts/sustainability
 - b. Raise awareness of the outcomes of research to drive whole-of-government activity
 - c. Raise awareness of the value of practice-based research in the creative arts.
3. *Expanding networks, partnerships and investment opportunities*
 - a. Improve access to cross-disciplinary research opportunities in partnership with publicly funded research and development agencies
 - b. Explore new pathways to commercialisation, including promoting existing opportunities as part of ARC Linkage grants, and investigating new mechanisms for commercialisation of creative arts and practice-based research
 - c. Increase the profile of industry-funded research and development across the creative arts.

3. Creative Leadership: Developing creative leaders and international exchange

What can the arts be and do?

How do the arts and cultural policy advance and shape Australia's public interest? What 'core values' do the arts embody in the context of high-growth creative industries? What should be the balance between private and public sectors? How does the arts sector engage with an increasingly ageing population? Or with the international development agenda? What benefits can the arts bring to the mental health crisis?

By providing a platform for speakers and industry leaders, the **Creative Leadership** initiative will establish a more coordinated contribution to such critical national and international debates. Sponsored by the Australia Council, the initiative recognises that the arts sector represents a diverse ecology, made up of intersecting networks of practitioners, administrators, policy makers and audiences, each playing a role in articulating the value of the arts in our ever-changing society.

Invited speakers will stimulate new directions, offer challenges and enliven the arts debate. In particular, **Creative Leadership** will facilitate discussion around the cultural and public values of the arts, beyond simplistic instrumental approaches, and respond to frustrations such as those expressed by former UK Minister for the Arts, Estelle Morris:

I know that Arts and culture make a contribution to health, to education, to crime reduction, to strong communities, to the nation's wellbeing, but I don't know how to evaluate it or describe it. We have to find a language and a way of describing its worth. It's the only way we'll secure the greater support we need.⁵

The core elements of **Creative Leadership** are:

- Forums and workshops with international experts and visionaries to generate public discussion about the role of creativity and the arts across areas of national interest, such as innovation, international development and community sustainability. This will commence with the visit in March 2006 of Chris Powell, chairman of the UK's National Endowment of Science, Technology and the Arts (NESTA), and Charles Landry, international expert in urban renewal and development.
- Support for Australia's next generation of cultural leaders, through mentoring and international exchange
- Potential cross-agency collaborations between the Australia Council and international development agencies, including AusAID
- Ongoing promotion of and support for the cultural and public values of the arts in progressing issues of national significance.

Creative Leadership will be coordinated by the Council's Strategy section and will contribute to the section's objectives in strategic and corporate planning, research and policy evaluation.

⁵ October 2003, quoted in *Capturing Cultural Value*, John Holden, Demos Dec 2004, p18. See www.demos.co.uk/catalogue/culturalvalue/

4. Create + Accelerate: Support for creative enterprise and innovation

Most Australian artists continue to earn low incomes and face many obstacles to generating income from their arts work. With 80 per cent of professional practising artists now employed as freelancers or contractors, many are effectively operating as micro-businesses and working across multiple sectors—but without much needed support.

In August 2004 the Australia Council adopted a plan to improve artists' incomes, in response to the findings of the most recent survey into individual artists' income and employment circumstances as reported in *Don't Give Up Your Day Job* by Professor David Throsby and Virginia Hollister. The Australia Council's plan recognises the significant entrepreneurialism of creative practitioners, and identifies a lack of start-up capital and business development skills as precluding many artists from accessing business development opportunities.⁶

The Council's plan recommends pilot initiatives in creative industry development, two of which have already assisted artists to build pathways to commercialisation in high growth areas: *Maker to Manufacturer to Market* and *Mobile Journeys*.

It also recommends investigation of industry assistance programs (IAPS) that might be promoted or adapted to assist artists. Consequently, the Australia Council has produced a database of available federal, state and local government IAPs that will be launched in 2006.

Create + Accelerate – Support for creative enterprises and innovation

Create + Accelerate is a program of support to artists in building sustainable and rewarding creative careers. It will offer information and services to support the Council's activity in the area of artists earned income.

The core elements of **Create + Accelerate** are:

- Access to information on existing IAPs for creative industries, including an interactive 'money map'⁷
- Information about initiatives funded through the Council's 2005–06 Strategic Allocations in the area of artists earned incomes⁸
- Continued investigation of digital content distribution models for creative content and applications⁹

An industry partnership with the QUT Centre of Excellence in Creative Industries and Innovation, which includes research in the area of Creative Enterprises and Sustainability.

⁶ The Australia Council's response to *Don't Give Up Your Day Job* can be found at: http://www.ozco.gov.au/research_centre/working_papers/

⁷ For the British model see <http://www.culture.gov.uk/moneymap/default.html>

⁸ Strategic Allocations to support Artists Earned Income will be announced in March 2006.

⁹ This includes *Mobile Journeys* – an Australia Council supported consortium including Australian Network for Art and Technology (ANAT), the Australian Interactive Media Industry Association (AIMIA), the South Australian Film Commission (SAFC) and dLux media arts.