

National priorities and industry linkage fund

Comments from Stuart Cunningham

Stuart Cunningham AM FAHA is Distinguished Professor of Media and Communications, Digital Media Research Centre, Creative Industries Faculty, Queensland University of Technology. These are comments developed from verbal contributions made during the National Priorities Industry Linkage Fund (NPILF) consultation session on Friday 9 October. I represented the Australian Council of Learned Academies (ACOLA) as a nominee of the Australian Academy of the Humanities (AAH).

I was President of the Council for Humanities, Arts and Social Sciences (CHASS) when we disseminated and promoted *Collaborating across the sectors: the relationships between the humanities, arts and social sciences (HASS) and science, technology, engineering and medicine (STEM) sectors* (<https://apo.org.au/node/15633>). I Chaired ACOLA's Securing Australia's Future (SAF) 10: Skills and capabilities for Australian enterprise innovation <https://acola.org/skills-capabilities-enterprise-innovation-saf10/> (ACOLA 10) which was led by the AAH. I was an adviser to the then Bureau of Communications and Arts Research (BCAR)'s work on the reports *The economic value of cultural and creative activity* (<https://www.communications.gov.au/departmental-news/economic-value-cultural-and-creative-activity-0>) (BCAR1) and *Creative Skills for the Future Economy* (<https://www.communications.gov.au/departmental-news/creative-skills-future-economy>) (BCAR2) and to A New Approach's Insight Report research program (See Australia's cultural and creative economy: A 21st century guide <https://www.humanities.org.au/2020/09/30/a-new-approach-releases-working-paper-on-australias-cultural-and-creative-economy/>) (ANA). These reports are referenced in my comments.

Work Integrated Learning (WIL) and Industry-University Partnerships models

I welcome the consultation paper's development of the Work Integrated Learning (WIL) and Industry-University Partnerships models. The Industry-University Partnerships have been modelled inclusively in such a way that all partnerships (industry, government, community) count. Some of the indicators and demonstrators may encourage education and research linkages, which may assist in some beneficial integration of these two pillars of the University system – pillars which are often being pulled apart with other policy levers.

Equally, WIL is modelled inclusively, and the call for Australia to collect data like the U.K.'s Higher Education Business & Community Interaction survey is welcomed as I am confident it would demonstrate strong WIL performance in the SHAPE (Social Sciences, Humanities & the Arts for People and the Economy) (<https://thisisshape.org.uk/>) disciplines. I will briefly give my own faculty as an example.

WIL in the Queensland University of Technology's Creative Industries Faculty (CIF)

The national average of participation in WIL is quoted in the consultation paper at 37.5% in 2017. QUT CIF average was 48.2% in 2017 and is now (2019 figures) 60.8%. With a new curriculum focus, it is planned to reach 90+ percent by 2021. CIF WIL focuses on not just traditional internships but undergraduates working with industry partners well beyond only the creative industry sector as such.

Source: email from Professor Gavin Sade, Associate Dean (Teaching and Learning), Creative Industries Faculty, 7 October 2020

To reiterate, WIL and Industry-University Partnerships allow for mission-based flexible applications crucial to a diverse sector.

The Creative Economy

The Australian Government has recognised the creative economy. When Arts Minister Fletcher announced the \$250 million JobMaker program for the arts, he pointed to a creative economy with a GDP contribution of \$112 billion and employing 600,000+ (BCAR1). The creative economy is made up of arts and media, architecture and design, all creative applications of software and digital, advertising and marketing. Pre-COVID, this substantial part of the Australian economy was growing at twice the rate of the general economy (ANA).

The consultation paper acknowledges that 2019 employment projections for the five years to May 2024 indicate that the shift toward services industries will continue, and that health care and social assistance, professional scientific and technical services, education and training, and construction are featured in growth projections. Each one of these is based on very substantial input from the SHAPE disciplines (BCAR2).

The government's own research shows that creative skills contribute to innovation-intensive industries. The most innovation-active sector (Information, Media and Telecommunications) has the highest portion of employees holding creative qualifications of any industry (BCAR2).

Of the six industries identified by BCAR2 as the fastest growing industries in 2016-17, three have leading shares of workers with creative qualifications – professional, scientific and technical services; rental, hiring and real estate services; and information, media and telecommunications.

Of the six industries least susceptible to automation, five are traditional humanities graduate destinations.

STEM/STEM+/Collaboration across the sectors

Whereas WIL and Industry-University Partnerships are forward-thinking and aligned well to job readiness in 21st-century Australia, a focus on STEM exclusivity is backward looking and STEM+ demonstrates how arbitrary the dividing line between STEM and the rest of the knowledge universe is. The Australian government's own research (BCAR2) shows that, in 2016, 9.5% of all Australian employment (about a million workers) had a creative qualification as their highest qualification (communication and media studies, design, advertising and marketing, creative IT, architecture and building, etc). Attaching architecture and building – for the first time, as far as I know, in a published Commonwealth document – to STEM shows how arbitrary the input-category of STEM is. **If there is to be incremental annexation of the SHAPE disciplines, design is an equal candidate, given that design thinking is so critical to the skills required by business and underpins innovation in architecture and building.**

What business ceaselessly emphasises that it is *skills mixing* (STEM and SHAPE working together) that is crucial for enterprise innovation. **Key Metrics, Demonstrators and Innovators should be targeted at Collaboration across the STEM and SHAPE sectors.** It is totally arbitrary and unsupported by evidence to claim that core skills such as problem solving, inquiry, digital literacy and creative and critical thinking are learned solely in the STEM+ disciplines. ACOLA 10 showed that Australia's most innovative enterprises value most highly skills mixing, not STEM skills in isolation. Strategies to incentivise and facilitate collaboration across the STEM and SHAPE sectors are what will address Australia's workforce needs of the future, an emphasis identified well back in CHASS' report from 2006.