

**DASSH response to the Call for Comment on the Consultation Paper,  
*Vision for a Science Nation. Responding to Science, Technology,  
Engineering and Mathematics: Australia's Future.***

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The Australasian Council of Deans of Arts, Social Sciences and Humanities (DASSH) welcomes the opportunity to comment on the Government's response to the Chief Scientist's report: *Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics: Australia's Future*, in the consultation paper, *Vision for a Science Nation. Responding to Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics: Australia's Future*.

DASSH represents Arts, Social Sciences and Humanities (ASSH) disciplines across Australia and NZ, including 37 Australian universities. We agree that the sciences are an integral part of our society and our economy and that a robust strategy to develop science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM) capacity, at all levels, is required to ensure Australia remains competitive and relevant in an ever-changing global environment. DASSH recognises particularly the need to attract inspiring science and mathematics teachers to help promote a strong understanding of the scientific project, as well as to secure the future research workforce. We endorse the call for a concerted effort to develop and implement a comprehensive science and research policy, where "science" is understood to include the advancement of knowledge, understanding and expression of the human condition. Given the "grand challenges" that Australia faces, we believe that future STEM policy should be developed in conjunction with the arts, social sciences and humanities (ASSH) and not developed in isolation from an appreciation of the complex social and cultural factors that shape effective responses to those challenges.

DASSH welcomes the Government's action on implementing a strategy to improve the translation of research into commercial outcomes. However, as we outlined in our [submission](#) in response to the *Boosting the Commercial Returns from Research* paper, we maintain that there are other important and indirect roles that publicly funded research can play in boosting the economy, creating the conditions for a business friendly environment, improving labour force skills, enhancing economic infrastructure and supporting creative, innovative thinking. ASSH research also serves to increase the economic impact, for example, of Australia's creative and cultural industries. We believe that Education and Industry policy would better support positive economic impacts of research if the potential for commercial returns were understood as situated in the much wider continuum of economic benefits to be gained from public funding of research.

DASSH supports the Government's planned review of the R&D Tax Incentive. In order to promote creativity, cultural engagement and social benefits from R&D, we call for the Government lift arbitrary barriers to investment in HASS research by industry and businesses, and for tax incentives to apply to R&D regardless of discipline.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> AusIndustry (2014). *The R&D Tax Incentive: A guide to interpretation*. Department of Industry, Canberra; p. 31; see also Turner, G. and Brass, K. (2014). *Mapping the Humanities, Arts and Social Sciences in Australia*. Australian Academy of the Humanities, Canberra; p. 43.

DASSH supports a number of the Government's research initiatives, and encourages the Government to commit funds to ensure research capability. These include:

- The adoption of Science and Research Priorities to provide a broad framework of funding priorities (consistent with independent peer review of research funding applications)
- The continued funding of the National Collaborative Research Infrastructure Strategy (NCRIS)
- The commissioning of the Australian Council of Learned Academies' review of Australia's research training system
- The continued funding of the Future Fellowships scheme.

DASSH acknowledges that STEM research is valuable in tackling a number of the current global challenges and that policies to ensure long-term stable investment in funding to address these are needed. However, all of these challenges involve people, politics, values and regulatory structures, none of which will be delivered by science alone. Nor can the social sciences and humanities aspects of these challenges be "tacked on" after the science is done: for successful outcomes, the STEM and HASS elements need to be addressed in tandem. The best international research in areas such as global security demonstrates the benefits of disciplinary collaboration in tackling complex problems.

In supporting the partnership between ASSH and STEM disciplines, DASSH notes the Chief Scientist's remarks in the foreword to the Australian Academy of the Humanities-commissioned report, *Mapping the Humanities, Arts and Social Sciences in Australia*:

There is no doubt in my mind that the disciplines we now group under the banner of STEM (science, technology, engineering and mathematics) are critical infrastructure.

But it is not, and has never been, STEM alone. The humanities, arts and social science (HASS) disciplines provide vital knowledge and understanding of our world, its peoples and societies...

Scientists cannot implement workable solutions without the confidence and consent of the community. Indeed, it is unlikely the solutions could be workable without an understanding of the people who have to carry them through. It is the potential of STEM made real in the lives of Australians, with the insight HASS can provide.

By the same token, the HASS disciplines have much to gain from close engagement with the ideas and ways of thinking born of STEM.

....[W]e will need to organise, evaluate and cohere; aligning our efforts and our investment with our national interests and building to a scale that matches a daunting need.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> Chubb, I. (2014). "Foreword", in Turner, G., and Brass, K. (2014) *Mapping the Humanities, Arts and Social Sciences in Australia*. Australian Academy of the Humanities, Canberra.



DASSH urges that the important role ASSH disciplines play in “our understanding of the world and to our competitiveness as a country”,<sup>3</sup> not be overlooked in the effort to ensure support for STEM capacity and research, especially where ASSH research supports achievement of the goals of industry, science and research policy.

Given the vital role ASSH research has to play in meeting the challenges of a modern world, DASSH urges the government to consult with and include ASSH representatives throughout the development and implementation of a comprehensive science and research policy.

Professor John Germov

**President**

**Australasian Council of Deans of Arts, Social Sciences and Humanities (DASSH)**

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### **About DASSH**

The Australasian Council of Deans of Arts, Social Sciences and Humanities (DASSH) is the authoritative agency on research, teaching and learning for the Arts, Social Sciences and Humanities (ASSH) in Australian and New Zealand universities.

DASSH supports those within these institutions who have responsibility for the governance and management of research and teaching and learning in their universities. DASSH also supports those who aspire to these positions through a Network of Associate Deans (Learning and Teaching) and a Network of Associate Deans (Research).

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<sup>3</sup> Commonwealth of Australia: *Vision for a Science Nation. Responding to Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics: Australia's Future*, p. 14.