

DASSH Response to the Call for Submissions to the Joint Select Committee on Trade and Investment Growth's Inquiry into Australia's Future in Research and Innovation

The Australasian Council of Deans of Arts, Social Sciences and Humanities (DASSH) welcomes this opportunity to respond to the Joint Select Committee on Trade and Investment Growth's Inquiry into Australia's Future in Research and Innovation.

The focus of DASSH's submission is on how the research and innovation sector, including the arts, social sciences and humanities, can better assist in overcoming Australia's geographic, economic and labour challenges, with a focus on commercialisation, including how technology imports and exports could be further facilitated.

The roles of researchers in the arts, social sciences and humanities disciplines in advancing the commercialisation agenda include as:

- Creators of ideas, processes and products with the potential to be commercialised;
- Co-creators of ideas, processes and products with the potential to be commercialised, working in collaboration with colleagues across all disciplines, including STEM;
- Collaborators with industry;
- Providers of expert advice, grounded in research, to industry, government and, indeed, to universities, on evaluating and improving innovation and commercialisation processes;
- Contributors to a broader national and international context/culture, within which innovation and commercialisation can flourish.

Universities, including the arts, social sciences and humanities disciplines, have a key enabling role to play in educating current and future generations so they can understand, create and pursue new opportunities in a rapidly changing world.

DASSH welcomes the heightened activity around the national innovation agenda (including commercialisation), as evidenced by the National Innovation and Science Agenda statement and various government enquiries and discussion papers, including, for example, the *Review of Research Policy and Funding Arrangements*, the *Vision for a Science Nation* consultation paper and the *Boosting the Commercial Returns from Research* discussion paper.

DASSH acknowledges and agrees with the ongoing concerns about Australia's rate of collaboration between industry and higher education and public research institutions being the lowest in the OECD. We endorse the aim of minimising barriers to collaboration and the provision of incentives to both universities and business/industry for improved engagement with each other and effective translation of research into outcomes of economic and social benefit.

We wish to emphasise two matters:

- The need to avoid narrow and restrictive assumptions about which academic disciplines or which industry sectors belong within the innovation agenda. As the National Innovation and Science Agenda declares, ‘innovation is important to every sector of the economy’. As a corollary, we note the importance of adopting a broad rather than a narrow definition of ‘innovation’.
- The importance of minimising barriers to collaboration. As we have noted in [submissions to other government reviews](#), there are a number of barriers to collaboration by humanities, arts and social science (HASS) researchers with businesses, including the explicit exclusion of HASS research from the current R&D tax incentives. In the past, HASS research, which may have commercial or wider economic impact, has been excluded from eligibility for particular publicly funded research support (e.g. Super Science Fellowships, International Science Linkages and, in the past, CRCs, and NCRIS). In a rapidly changing world in which complex problems demand multidisciplinary approaches, excluding certain disciplines or sectors is counter-productive.

Finally, the Joint Select Committee’s broad focus on overcoming Australia’s geographic, economic and labour challenges serves to highlight the broader context in which commercialisation occurs. In addition to being directly relevant to commercialisation, publicly funded research can play other important and indirect roles in boosting the economy, creating the conditions for a business friendly environment, improving labour force skills, enhancing economic infrastructure and supporting creative, innovative thinking. Geographic, economic and labour challenges involve people, politics, values and regulatory structures – all areas of research focus for the arts, social sciences and humanities. Examples of contributions by the HASS disciplines to what could be termed a healthy cultural innovation system include:

- Fostering a climate of innovation through the creative and performing arts and creative industries (e.g. music, visual arts, dance, drama, literature and creative writing, museums, art galleries, film, TV, radio, emerging digital technologies).
- Facilitating scientific and technological innovation through legal and regulatory innovation, and ethical and public policy analysis of the social benefits and risks of specific innovations.
- Enabling cross-cultural communication and understanding through the teaching of languages, and research in linguistics and language pedagogy.

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

11 February 2016



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 (DASSH) 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).