

**Launch of *Mapping the Humanities, Arts and Social Sciences in Australia*
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It is extremely fitting that the Chief Scientist should help launch this report as it was inspired by his 2012 report on the health of the sciences. Professor Chubb's report provided a baseline of information and analysis for policy and planning for the science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM) disciplines, and highlighted, by example, the need for a similar baseline to be set for the humanities, arts and social sciences (HASS) disciplines.

The President of the Academy of the Humanities, Professor Lesley Johnson, convinced the then minister for Department of Innovation, Industry, Climate Change, Science, Research and Tertiary Education, (blessed with the acronym of DIICCSRTE), Senator Chris Evans, to support the project, and it was ultimately funded jointly by the Academies of Humanities and of Social Sciences, the Department of Industry, and the Office of the Chief Scientist.

We received generous in-kind support from Professor Chubb's office, and from the Australian Research Council. I chaired the project with the assistance of Deputy Chair, Professor Mark Western, and a Steering Committee of Professor Joy Damousi, Professor Stephen Garton, and Professor Sue Richardson.

The project was managed by the Secretariat of the Academy of the Humanities. For that I owe particular thanks to Dr Tina Parolin, Executive Director of the Academy of the Humanities, I also wish to acknowledge the good work of our researcher, Dr Rebecca Coates, but most especially I want to acknowledge the person whose hard work, expertise and judgment has made

this report what it is: Dr Kylie Brass, who was Academy of the Humanities' project manager responsible for the Mapping HASS initiative, and the co-author of this report.

Typically, some would say almost pathologically, the HASS sector tends to feel it does not get the attention and support it deserves. While we might be tempted to tell them just to harden up, there are often good reasons for that feeling. On the one hand, people can undervalue the knowledge they generate because the focus of their work is so directly related to people's everyday lives; at its best, it can just seem like common sense rather than specialized expertise. On the other hand, when these disciplines get a little too sophisticated and develop technical terminology (routine and acceptable for the sciences but not for HASS!), the media in particular tend to bolt for the exits, screaming "postmodernism, run for your lives!".

More seriously, and regrettably, those wishing to make the case for the sector have been hampered by the lack of strong empirical evidence of what they do, the value it brings to the nation, and the conditions in which they do it.

This report puts an end to that. What it provides is evidence, in abundance, of what the HASS sector contributes to the nation, while also pointing to issues that are critical to its future. If the nation wants to maintain a strong and vibrant HASS sector, the evidence contained in this report is vital to the planning and commitment that will require.

The HASS disciplines are fundamental components of every comprehensive national university system around the globe. However, the community does need reminding not only that the knowledge and understandings these disciplines generate are intrinsically valuable in themselves but also that they are especially valuable in the complex environment we face today. Responding to today's social, cultural and economic challenges requires specialist knowledge of the peoples,

societies, regions and cultures that underpin, fuel or react to these challenges. The HASS disciplines are integral to achieving this fine-tuned understanding.

However, Australia's approach to generating and maintaining our national capacity in the HASS disciplines to date has been highly contingent upon short-term strategic policy settings, relatively autonomous institutional and sector-level funding decisions, and fluctuations in student demand and study preferences.

A nation of our size has no option but to be strategic in how it invests its resources, and to plan its futures. For this to happen, decision-makers at all levels need authoritative information on our current capacities in order to plan for the future. Until now, the information which would make this possible for the HASS sector has simply not been available in an accessible form. This report is a major first step towards a more informed understanding of the current health of the sector.

We want this report to be used – by academic staff, by academic planners and administrators, by departments, schools, faculties and universities, and by policy-makers within government. There is a great deal of detail, and an impressive collection of data. This is information that has never been aggregated before, and the benefits it offers to us, simply by becoming available, are considerable.

So, what have we found?

First, these fields are currently in good health and make a substantial contribution to the nation's education, research, training and employment:

1. In research they are among the highest performing fields of research (FoRs); of the top 5 FoRs in the last ERA (those with the highest numbers of a ranking of 5), 2 are from

HASS (History and Archaeology, and Language Communication and Culture. Against the ERA's Discipline Growth Index, of the 62 disciplines returning above average growth (that is, above 12%), 32 are HASS disciplines. They are impressively productive: although they generate only 16% of the nation's research income, and receive 28% of R&D investment, they are responsible for 34% of the nation's research outputs.

- In teaching, there is continuing demand, high levels of student satisfaction, and the long-term value of generalist degrees such as HASS offer, like those in science, is emerging as a significant social benefit for the kind of future we face. The sector carries more than its share of undergraduate and postgraduate teaching: HASS teaches 65% of Australia's students with 52% of the staff. Over 2002-12, the average staff-student ratio (SSR) in HASS was 22.6, while in STEM it was 16.8. This was preceded by increase in HASS SSRs over the preceding decade of between 27% and 35%. The positive way of seeing this is as a substantial gain in productivity – but it can also be seen as evidence of a significantly increased workload.
- While it is commonplace for government and media to spruik the value of professional training programs, thus implying that a generalist HASS degree may not offer the same employment outcomes, around 60% of tertiary-educated Australians have a HASS degree. This would suggest that something around that percentage of those currently in the workforce are HASS trained. HASS graduates are highly employable, across a wide range of occupations. For instance, four years out from graduation, 90% of those graduates from the Society and Culture field of education who are available for employment, have found fulltime employment.

- Increasingly, the strategic value of HASS research in addressing complex national and global problems that require multidisciplinary solutions is explicitly acknowledged by policy makers, by leading members of the science community and organizations such as CSIRO. This is evident in the significant engagement of HASS research with the public sector, in particular; the ARC's Linkage program generated 22% of HASS ARC research income.

So, the HASS fields are not 'in crisis'. There are, however, critical issues for the future which demand attention if the sector is to remain strong and competitive into the future.

First, the demand-driven system has led to market failures with implications for the national interest.

- Fluctuations in student demand have put pressure on areas of low enrolment, risking the loss of expertise in areas of national or strategic importance. Expertise in regional languages and cultures is the most often cited example of this but there are more. The condition of Less Commonly Taught Languages (LCTL) (including Cantonese, Hindi, Thai) is of particular concern; there are 32 programs nationally but half of these are at the ANU and in total only 9 universities have accepted the responsibility to support LCTL.
- As a result of the higher education sector's response to fluctuations in demand, HASS offerings are increasingly concentrated in the metropolitan universities, thus significantly limiting the opportunities for students wishing to study HASS in regional Australia. There are major disciplines which are simply not taught in the regional universities at all, and in one or two cases not outside the Group of Eight. A similar trend is also apparent in research funding; 65% of ARC grant income goes to the Group of Eight and only 4% goes to regional universities.

- The government's current patterns of cluster funding for disciplines plays a part in this, having significant ramifications on course offerings and research expertise in the medium to long term that are not necessarily evident in the short term. In combination with the operation of a demand-driven system, the cluster funding arrangements risk making disciplines the nation needs appear to be non-viable in the short-term, and thus highly vulnerable in the long term.

Second, there are systemic impediments to the participation of HASS disciplines in the sector as a whole.

- Examples here include the exclusion from the tax concession for research, the exclusion of HASS from some strategic research initiatives, the manner in which the design of some sector-wide initiatives implicitly or even systemically privileges STEM research, and the minimal levels of research infrastructure spending on HASS-related capabilities through central government programs and by the universities.

Third, the challenges to the HASS academic workforce for the future.

- The HASS workforce, like that of the whole sector, is ageing, and patterns of appointment suggest that there is a looming crisis of supply. 50% of the HASS FTE academic workforce is over 50. The supply of replacement staff is challenged by the trend towards the casualization of the workforce, and by unbalanced staff profiles which often involve high levels of junior appointments. In some HASS disciplines, there has been a 43% increase in casual staff, as opposed to 13% FTE. The increase in casual staff and the aging FTE cohort carry risks and challenges for succession planning, curriculum development, future leadership and the renewal of the workforce.

- The shift towards casual staff can be seen as a response to funding pressures caused by the cluster funding and the rising staff-student ratios. Over 2002-2012, student load for the HASS sector grew by 44% while the growth in staff numbers was exactly half that, at 22%. Given the expansion in other aspects of the academic workload, such as managing students' online access to teaching staff, this is an unsustainable trend that is likely not only to affect the quality of the education provided, but also the capacity for the academic workforce to find time for research. Already there are worrying signs of disenchantment among younger members of the workforce with one survey finding that 40% of those under 30 are planning to leave the sector within the next five to ten years.

Finally, we need to stress the importance of the universities' institutional investment in the health and future of the HASS disciplines.

While we are prone to blame our governments for failures in education funding, the universities themselves have to bear some of the responsibility as well. Both government and the universities are the custodians of our national capacities in these fields, and their maintenance in the national interest. The evidence in the report indicates that individual institutional investments play a major role, and that their decisions are driven as much by concerns internal to each university as by the national funding environment.

There is reason to look closely at how universities have allocated funding to the HASS disciplines, and the degree to which it can be claimed that there has been a pattern of institutional disinvestment in HASS by at least some universities. Within what is framed overwhelmingly as a competitive system, there is currently no systemic mechanism to assist universities to respond to market failure in ways that protect the national interest, not just the commercial interest of the institution. And there are few incentives for universities to behave (individually and in general)

in a way that manages their national responsibility for these capabilities. However, this report does cite current examples of positive steps in this direction, from within the current funding parameters, such as groups of universities collaborating to maintain quality and capacity in areas of fluctuating demand.

To conclude

The current condition of the HASS disciplines is greatly influenced by the effects of policy settings that have in some cases handed over the responsibility of planning to the operation of the market, or in other cases, have left the responsibility for the maintenance of our national resources to the internal consideration of individual universities. The evidence in this report suggests that this is an operating environment that, un-moderated, will not serve Australia well in the long term. As Professor Chubb has argued in relation to STEM, Australia is not big enough to just let the market do the job; we need to make strategic decisions and to plan what we can and should do as a nation. He has outlined a national research strategy to this end, and it is pleasing to see the recent establishment of the Commonwealth Science Council as one step towards such a strategy.

There are many issues of national importance which require long term planning, however, which are not about science or indeed about commercialization. It is to be hoped that this body will continue the practice that was established in its predecessor, PMSEIC, of drawing on HASS expertise on, for instance, the understanding and management of social change, the management of our relation to the natural environment, and developing our understanding of the region and our place in it. In all of these areas, our efforts will fail if the HASS perspective is not included.

However, this report underlines the need for a greater commitment to the oversight and planning of the HASS sector itself. It is important that we do not lose sight of the fact that the humanities and social sciences have their own unique contribution to make to the nation.

The nation best equipped to survive change and adversity is the nation who knows its own histories and those of its neighbours; the nation who understands and respects its institutions, heritage and culture; and the nation who is unafraid of critically evaluating the distribution of opportunity and power across society. None of that is possible without the humanities and social sciences.

The work of these disciplines is fundamental to a modern, civilized society and they feed directly into the quality of that society – not only as providers of training and innovation, but also as generators of knowledge and understanding, which is a public good, of value to every Australian.