



8-Point Plan to Humanise the Future

predominantly focussed only on the potential of the science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM) disciplines.

For example, we must shift from the myopic view that digital skills and literacy are the province only of STEM. Digital innovators exist across the disciplinary divides, and expertise from philosophy and ethics, cultural studies, media and communications, the arts, sociology, law, economics and ethnography is needed to ensure that the benefits from digital transformations flow equitably and safely across society and industry.

Similarly, Australia is failing to effectively mobilise the research sector to address the full range and scale of pressing societal and cultural issues – including domestic violence, social cohesion, poverty, and diminishing trust in our institutions – because our research priorities are currently set by and for a science agenda. We must involve more voices in identifying research areas of national need.

This is not a zero-sum game. Harnessing the capacity of the HASS sector does not mean reducing the opportunities for STEM. It does though require a commitment to recognising the value of this expertise, lifting investment in HASS disciplines, adopting a comprehensive approach to research priority setting, and removing discipline-based barriers to HASS involvement in government programs designed to translate the benefits of research for the nation.

3 Review the design and effectiveness of publicly-funded schemes for HASS research

The HASS sector is under serious stress from declining government investment, with early and mid-career funding support in the humanities at an all-time low. While multiple plans and strategies have been developed for the STEM disciplines, the HASS sector has been neglected. There is no map of areas of strategic need or capacity, and no plan for addressing capability gaps or areas requiring investment in the national interest. Nor is there an overarching strategy for the research system as a whole, articulating how and when HASS and STEM should connect and interact.

THE HUMANITIES are drivers of social change and awareness, record keepers of the past and present, and are the creative and human face of innovation and progress. They build the cultural literacy of the nation through deep and sustained research into the history and cultures of our own communities, and other nations and peoples. The Australian Academy of the Humanities champions the contribution that the arts, culture, music, history, language and literature make to our national life.

Below is our 8-Point Plan to ensure a humanised future for Australia.

1. Ensure ethical, historical and cultural expertise informs all government agendas
2. Abandon the siloed approach to policy-making which separates STEM and HASS
3. Review the design and effectiveness of publicly-funded schemes for HASS research
4. Return the \$4.2M stripped from ARC research funding to the humanities
5. Expedite infrastructure investment to drive technological innovation for the HASS sector
6. Invest in intercultural capability through comprehensive language education
7. Incorporate creative, cultural and digital sectors in industry development programs
8. Develop clearer national policy settings to guide investment in a culturally confident Australia

1 Ensure ethical, historical and cultural expertise informs all government agendas

A human-centred approach to policy-making requires all government agendas to be informed by ethical, historical, creative and cultural expertise – from inclusive and diverse workforce strategies to successful global engagements, natural and cultural resources policy that responds to community needs, ethical and inclusive digital transformations, thriving creative and cultural industries, and cohesive, strong communities.

The Chief Scientist model has been extremely effective in providing advice on science issues; a similar formal mechanism is needed to provide a conduit to government for social and cultural expertise – one that coordinates and connects with science-based advice.

2 Abandon the siloed approach to policy-making which separates STEM and HASS

The humanities, arts and social sciences (HASS), comprise close to 50% of Australia's research workforce. Most of Australia's university students – 61% or 606,721 students – are educated in HASS. Yet our policy levers across education, research and innovation remain

The lack of funding and policy direction has reduced incentives for universities themselves to invest in the HASS disciplines. The latest Excellence in Research for Australia results paint a stark picture of the growing divide in capacity between STEM and HASS. An independent review is urgently required to identify how to more effectively resource and harness our social and cultural expertise for the nation.

4 Return the \$4.2M stripped from ARC research funding to the humanities

In the current funding climate, the \$4.2M stripped from humanities applicants to the Australian Research Council (ARC) by secret Ministerial veto last year was a severe hit to the sector. As an immediate first step, the Academy calls on the Australian Government to restore the \$4.2M funding to the humanities through either an additional allocation to the ARC programs from which the funds were withdrawn, or through the creation of an ARC Special Research Initiative or another mechanism designed to build capacity in strategic areas of need.

The rigorous and independent assessment processes of the ARC must be respected and protected.

5 Expedite infrastructure investment to drive technological innovation for the HASS sector

The 2016 [Research Infrastructure Roadmap](#) identified that advancing research in the HASS disciplines was ‘critical to our future and requires a nationally coordinated approach to infrastructure development to drive transformations in the way researchers discover, access, curate and analyse Australia’s social and cultural data’. Despite being identified as a priority area now for over a decade, direct investment in the HASS sector (again, almost 50% of the research workforce) is less than 1% of the \$3.3 billion government funding to date. The delay in funding for a scoping study to progress a HASS capability (including Indigenous research platforms) until 2020–21 effectively kicks the can down the road. The sector is investment-ready; it simply needs government to take action on this priority and redress the stark imbalance in the allocation of public funding.

6 Incorporate creative, cultural and digital sectors in industry development programs

In 2016–17, the contribution from cultural and creative activity grew to \$11.7 billion – 6.4% of GDP. Other countries are investing heavily and planning for the development of these industries, yet in Australia there is little recognition of their potential to contribute to our cultural and economic future.

A 2017 [OECD report](#) found that Australia’s innovation skills remain weak, recommending that Government widen ‘the scope of subsidies for innovation-related subjects beyond STEM’. We need to firmly embed the HASS disciplines in our future vision for the nation, remove barriers to their participation, and include emerging industries in industry development incentive programs, such as the Industry Growth Centres, Industrial Transformation Scheme and Cooperative Research Program where HASS research can contribute to areas of public good, growth and competitive advantage for Australia.

Australia also has an opportunity to be a world leader in bringing together cutting-edge research in the humanities and emerging digital industries to help address some of the most urgent challenges facing these industries today: namely trust, transparency, equity, and the integrity of the political system.

7 Invest in intercultural capability through comprehensive language education

The national deficit in language capability is one of Australia’s great unrecognised skills shortages. Australia’s national effort in sustaining language learning has faltered. This is a result of policy failure, not lack of demand. The ability to communicate, engage and build trust across cultures at local, regional and global levels is as urgent as ever before. A nationally coordinated approach that balances the maintenance of Australia’s community and Indigenous language skills with acquisition of strategic language capabilities is urgently required to support the full range of Australia’s cross-cultural engagements, both at home and abroad.

8 Develop clearer national policy settings to guide investment in a culturally confident Australia

The public funds provided to the arts and culture sector are currently allocated without clear national policy settings. Australia needs a new national conversation on the benefits of cultural literacy, cultural production and consumption, and public and private investment. The policy approach should be framed by an inclusive definition of culture, including tangible and intangible heritage, human attitudes and behaviour, languages and beliefs, and knowledge systems and social practices. It should recognise that not all cultural activity or benefits are measurable through metrics, and work with the sector to develop a multi-dimensional view of public value.

Clearer national policy settings for the cultural sector should connect and integrate with policy frameworks across a broad range of government agendas, including education, research, industry and innovation, trade, health, defence, tourism, and diplomacy. Investing in a culturally confident Australia will pay dividends across society. As held by arts and culture think tank, [A New Approach](#), ‘when it comes to culture, we all contribute to – and benefit from – our shared cultural confidence’.

About the Academy

The [Australian Academy of the Humanities](#) is the national body championing the contribution that humanities make to national life. Established in 1969, we are an independent, not-for-profit organisation with a Fellowship of over 600 leaders and experts in culture, history, the arts, languages, linguistics, philosophy and ethics, archaeology and heritage. We provide independent and authoritative advice, including to government, to ensure ethical, historical and cultural perspectives inform discussions regarding Australia’s future challenges and opportunities.

The Academy is a partner in [A New Approach](#), an independent think tank championing confidence in Australia’s cultural future.

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