

THE BIG PICTURE — A PLANNING MATRIX FOR THE AUSTRALIAN VISUAL ARTS AND CRAFT SECTOR

Table of Contents

INTRODUCTION	3
KEY TRENDS.....	7
Proposition 1 – Research and Cultural Policy Development	20
Proposition 2 — Government Approach.....	21
Proposition 3 – Increased Secure Funding Benchmark	22
Proposition 4 — Arts Funding Authorities.....	25
Proposition 5 – Visual Arts, Craft and Design Education	27
Proposition 6 – Artists’ Professional Status.....	30
Proposition 7 — Artists’ Rights.....	32
Proposition 8 — Visual and Craft Artists’ Incomes.....	34
Proposition 9 – Visual Arts & Craft Business Assistance	36
Proposition 10 — Changes in Roles and Responsibilities	38
Proposition 11 - Support for Indigenous Arts and Crafts.....	41
Proposition 12 — Private Sector.....	44
Proposition 13 — Australia Business Arts Foundation (AbaF).....	46

Proposition 14 – Regional Arts and Craft	48
Proposition 15 – Government Support for Overseas Projects.....	50
Proposition 16 – Cultural Trade	54
Proposition 17 – Cultural Tourism	55
Proposition 18 – Technology Banks	56
Proposition 19 – Digital Research Centre	57
Proposition 20 – The Australian Digital Collection	61
Proposition 21 – Community Attitudes, Art Publishing and the Media	62

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If, as a society, we are to comprehend how the arts contribute to our lives, it is important to understand how art is produced and what problems face those who produce it. From a social point of view, as a community, we need to accord to artists the respect they deserve as professionals who contribute in so many ways and with such dedication and skill to advancing our cultural life. From a policy point of view, an understanding of the conditions of professional artistic practice is essential if effective measures for nurturing the growth of the arts in Australia are to be developed.

David Throsby and Virginia Hollister, *Don't Give Up Your Day Job: An Economic Study of Professional Artists in Australia*, (Australia Council, Sydney, 2003 p.12)

INTRODUCTION

This research project has been undertaken in partnership between the Department of Art History and Theory at the University of Sydney and the National Association for the Visual Arts (NAVA). During the late nineties, NAVA was becoming increasingly concerned over the state of health of the visual arts and craft sector. Research reports and anecdotal evidence indicated that there was a steady decline in public funding and a concomitant diminution of capacity of the visual arts/craft support infrastructure to cope, especially under the pressure of an increasing level of demand both from practitioners and audiences. It was also evident that new opportunities were opening up internationally and through technological changes. The longitudinal studies by Professor David Throsby of the economic circumstances of arts practitioners indicated that the level of visual artists' and craft practitioners' incomes was dropping and that a substantial proportion of practitioners were earning below the poverty level.

With these concerns in mind, in 1999, the partners in this research project sought funding to study the impact on the sector over a ten year time frame of the five most significant intersecting forces determining its fate: Government Policy; Economic Environment; Globalisation; Technological Change; and Community Attitudes. Our interest was to reveal their influence on both art practice and infrastructure. We hoped that, in making evident the trends and their causes, the results of our research would be useful in guiding policy and funding decisions and assist practitioners' understanding. As a result of a change of one of the principal investigators, Professor Terry Smith, our research has taken much longer than planned. Meanwhile, the sector has been through some very dynamic changes and this has meant that some of our early research has been eclipsed by recent events. However, we believe our study will provide a useful snapshot of a particularly important moment of change in the circumstances of the Australian visual arts and craft sector, and that our analysis has kept pace with the changes, and is valid at the point of publication.

For several years in the late nineties, the visual arts/craft sector had been lobbying both the Australia Council and federal and state/territory governments about the need for a detailed evaluation of the state of health of the sector and the pressing need for increased government funding. A successful approach was made to the Australian Research Council (ARC) with extra assistance provided by the Australia Council for this Big Picture research project.

Meanwhile, the government's positive response and increase in funding to the major performing arts organisations in 2000 as a result of the report of the Nugent Inquiry gave extra impetus for lobbying to continue and in 2001, the Federal Government responded by commissioning the Inquiry into the Contemporary Visual Arts and Craft Sector (the Myer Inquiry), the report of which was made public in September 2002. In this report were twenty recommendations. They proposed an increase in funding of \$15 million a year and some valuable policy and legislative changes.

During the progress of the Myer Inquiry, the statistical and analytical work completed by the Big Picture study and the policy ideas resulting from the previous Visual Arts Industry Guidelines Research project, provided evidence for the major detailed submission made by NAVA to the Myer Inquiry in 2001. This work and continuing liaison with the sector had a significant impact on Myer's findings. In the May 2003 budget, the Federal Government responded by offering to commit extra funds if these were matched by all the state and territory governments. Finally in December 2003, agreement was reached for a real increase in funding to the contemporary visual arts and craft sector from federal and state/territory governments of \$39 million over four years 2003/4 - 6/7. Some of the legislative and policy recommendations are gradually being implemented. These responses are bringing about some long-needed changes to the lives of artists and their support organisations.

We hope that the Big Picture research outcomes will continue to provide valuable information to guide the process of policy development and implementation by governments and the Australia Council and for the sector itself. We also see it as a model for data collection and analysis, which should be done on a regular basis to provide longitudinal evidence on which policy bodies could base their development of cultural policies.

The authors would like to acknowledge the efforts of a diverse group of researchers who have assisted us in this project with their skills and expertise. Thanks are due to those who conducted primary research: Blair French, Adam Geczy, Inje Jarosiewicz, Merrilee Kessler, Susan Ostling, Mary Travers and Shane Walker-Haseman, with special thanks due to Blair French and Merrilee Kessler who also ably managed the research project at different stages.

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We are indebted to everyone who answered questionnaires and provided other valuable information and opinion¹ which have informed the conclusions we have been able to draw. However, the opinions expressed in the key trends and propositions are our own.

Catriona Moore
Julian Pefanis
Tamara Winikoff

¹ Not named because of confidentiality agreements.

KEY TRENDS

General

There are cross-sectoral interests, interdisciplinarity and partnerships evident between arts and education, science, health, environment, tourism, community development, urban design, advertising and heritage interpretation. Links are being made in every imaginable area. This has led to a call for a whole of government approach to arts support and policy development. As well as wanting arts objectives to be integrated across a range of human activity, the arts are often pressed to supplement their income from these other sources. In the past, the arts has tried to expand their area of influence by courting other government departments, such as education, employment, foreign affairs, tourism and Indigenous affairs, but success usually has been short-lived. These approaches continue, however, and some mechanisms are currently in place that facilitate this (for example, the Federal Government's Indigenous Arts Development Policy and Action Plan 2003).²

From the seventies, there was a general surge of interest in national and cultural identity. This was also extensively explored in art practice. Indigenous, multicultural, gender and sexual preference, disability, class and age issues were all the subject of policies and programs of assistance and taken up by advocacy organisations which were often formed for the purpose of affirming the importance of these issues. However, by the mid-nineties things were changing. Economic rationalism had become a pervasive force and its impact was ubiquitous. Less and less were access and equity the catch cry of the arts community. Rather, the targets became excellence, marketability, technological edge, innovation and the concept of building the nation's "cultural capital", encouraging artists to become part of the "creative industries" and fostering exports. Characterising the arts as an industry led to the Art Workers Union's first call, in 1979-80, for the introduction of appropriate industrial conditions for artists and measures to protect their rights. This was further developed from the early nineties by the National Association for the Visual Arts (NAVA) to encompass copyright, moral rights and resale royalties, scales of fees and wages, codes of practice, taxation, social security and the concept of the "living wage", insurance, superannuation, occupational health and safety, and freedom of expression. Most recently, the negotiation of a Free Trade Agreement with the US led to a vigorous attempt by the arts sector to protect Australian content quotas. Rapid changes in communication have precipitated the call for visual literacy and communication to be regarded as of equal importance for the community as text literacy and numeracy.

Over the last thirty years, community interest in and support for the arts has expanded but government funding, sponsorship, philanthropy and self-generated income has not kept pace with the growth of the sector. Discussion about the arts' role in contributing to quality of life has taken a back seat, though in the last couple of years it occasionally enters the rhetoric of a few politicians from all parties. However, over the last three or four years, the concept of "creative industries", which has percolated to Australia from

² See M. Travers, Big Picture research report *Federal Government*

Britain and the US, has created a new level of interest from politicians and in the sector itself, though this was prefigured by the “Creative Nation” policy in the mid-nineties.³ Both politicians and the arts sector foresee the opportunities which can be generated by applying the creativity generated through arts skills to stimulating innovation in cultural and other related sectors, thus helping Australia to develop and capitalise on a service and information economy. This understanding is affirmed by the recent establishment of the Council of Humanities, Arts and Social Sciences (CHASS), an advocacy body that is being funded by government to boost the attention paid to these three disciplines in policy and research funding settings in an equivalent way to science. CHASS has called for these disciplines to be represented on the Prime Minister’s Science, Engineering and Innovation Council and for a new portfolio to be established bringing together Education, Research and Training. CHASS sees these changes as helping to “...unlock the potential of people working in the humanities, arts and social sciences and allow them to play a full part in stimulating new industry and helping formulate new policy”.

Government Policy

In Australia no government has ever produced a national cultural policy, though the Labor government attempted it in 1994 with *Creative Nation*, which recognised that creative industries could be a significant force in generating employment and economic growth. While this document was a first genuine attempt to draw together a number of areas of interest, it was by no means comprehensive or integrated. The Australian Democrats later developed a cultural policy document for the 2001 election. However, while it makes a better attempt at a more comprehensive and integrated approach, it is not based on any special purpose study or evaluation and is fairly general in its propositions.

Government interest in the arts has waxed and waned, and their arts policies and funding have usually not been well researched or strategic. On many occasions, initiatives have been primarily politically motivated or a response to lobbying by a particular interest group. This lack of coherence is beginning to be addressed by initiatives like the Nugent and Myer inquiries, but neither of these research reports was designed to be comprehensive in scope. The status of artists has remained marginal, and general industry policies and the conditions they create have impacted adversely on artists. Advocacy bodies like the National Association for the Visual Arts (NAVA), Viscopy, the Arts Law Centre of Australia and the Australian Copyright Council have worked both independently and together to address some of the key issues facing the sector.

The growth of the arts was enormously stimulated by the establishment of the Australia Council in the mid seventies and through it the distribution of substantial Federal Government funding across all artform areas. In its charter were enshrined the two key principles of arms length policy and peer assessment decision making, both of which have been diminishing over recent years. Over its life, the structure of the Australia Council has been changed quite frequently often with previous decisions reversed.⁴ In the

³ See further discussion of ‘creative industries’ in A.Geczy, Big Picture research report, *Education*

⁴ See M.Travers, Big Picture research report *Federal Government*

mid 1990s the emphasis in the Council's focus began to change from "arts production" to "arts consumption" with the creation of what was called the Audience and Market Development division. The changes being proposed for implementation in 2005 will see the Council itself gaining control of a larger budget to be used to initiate fewer but larger projects and strategies, designed to be marketed to politicians and the community at large. This strategy is being adopted rather than the previous approach where strategic funding was decided through peer assessment. The arts community continues to call for research monitoring and analysis of the outcomes of the Council's policies and programs, to generate information that can be used in policy development and advocacy.

Changes in the late eighties saw the visual arts, craft and design sector's representation on the Council drop from three to one. The amalgamation of the Visual Arts and Crafts Boards in 1987 alienated many in the craft sector who claimed that there was a decline in policy development and funding of craft. At almost the same time, the closure of the Australia Council's Design Arts Board in 1988 resulted in the loss of advocacy and support for the development of a design culture in Australia. This was temporarily offset by the creation of a hybrid entity for the Council, the Community, Environment, Art and Design Committee, which was supported by the Community Cultural Development Board and the Visual Arts Craft Board. However this program disappeared in the mid nineties.

In 1993 \$5.5 million (over four years) from the Australia Council's budget allocation was earmarked for the establishment in Melbourne of the Foundation for Australian Cultural Development, a new and independent cultural body that shortly became known as the Foundation for Culture and the Humanities. Its objectives took some time to become clear—reflecting the varied interests of the key people who had lobbied for its creation. Its agenda was clearly much broader than that of the Australia Council: to stimulate intellectual debate and community engagement in discussions about Australian history, heritage and national identity. Its focus was on brokering partnerships between sectors using its funds for leverage. By 2000 it had been renamed the Australia Business Arts Foundation and had a different agenda closely aligned with the Coalition government's push to increase private sector arts sponsorship.⁵ It continues to be supported by government funding and private sector contributions. Its sponsorship work is primarily focussed on the performing arts and on major companies, though its training programs are aimed more broadly including at the middle and lower scale levels of the industry. In 2003 it expanded its scope by entering into a partnership with the Australia Council to establish ArtSupport, a program designed to stimulate arts philanthropy. To date there has been no publicly available assessment of the outcomes of AbaF's efforts.

In 2005 the Australia Council closed down the Community Cultural Development and New Media Arts Boards and integrated their funding and policy responsibilities into other areas of Council's operations. A new section, Key Organisations, was created to guide the business planning of triennially-funded organisational clients.

⁵ Based on unpublished research report: M. Kessler, *Big Picture Australia Business Arts Foundation Interview*

Economic environment

From the late sixties the growth in arts practice and infrastructure has been prodigious. The establishment of the Australia Council and the formation of Commonwealth and State Government arts ministries and agencies had an enormous influence on the development of the visual arts and craft infrastructure and the promotion of art in Australia. However, funding to the visual arts and craft still goes predominantly to support the major state galleries. The Myer report notes that, in 2000, more than \$56 million dollars went towards the administration and program costs of major art museums and that "a high percentage of total government funding to the visual arts and craft is invested in capital works and running costs of the major art museums". As borne out in this Big Picture research and the Myer study, acquisitions of contemporary art for these institutions are usually made via benefaction, donation, philanthropy etc. Tax concessions provide some incentive, but it is felt that more are needed. A large percentage of gifts are from artists who are not able to access the same tax benefits as others. This obviously has implications in recognising the many ways in which artists support infrastructure. Many public galleries also receive funding via the Commonwealth through programs such as Visions Australia and the Federation funds, and have been supported by the Commonwealth Government's art indemnity scheme. Through the demands of cost recovery, there has been increasing though uneven pressure on public galleries to sell art and craftwork, in competition with the private sector. This has led to protests from the private sector that this contravenes competition policy.⁶

Since the 'eighties, the consolidation of the ideology of economic rationalism and the diminution of the value of financial support for the visual arts and craft have been the major economic challenges for the visual arts and craft sector. This has created a crisis for the sector in trying to deal with the consequences of rapid growth in interest and expectations from the community, expansion in infrastructure, the proliferation of tertiary training courses, the opening up of international opportunities and the increase in costs of operation. There has been a concomitant, increased awareness amongst artists to expect to be paid professional fees rather than to work voluntarily..

There have been fluctuations in the level of funding allocated to the Australia Council and the attitude of governments to the value of the Council. During the mid-eighties its funding allocation rose quite rapidly but following the 1987 McLeay Report, several of the Boards were amalgamated. During the late eighties and early nineties, the Coalition constantly threatened to do away with the Council. However, its fortunes were to rise again during the "Keating years" when it was put onto triennial funding and its core funding rose to a peak in 1995. After the change of government in 1996, the core funding to the Council was cut again, but extra funds were devolved and allocated in four areas of specified interest. These earmarked funds were for regional development assistance, youth arts, music and festivals. This has led to policy development and project activity in these areas by the Australia Council, and through devolved funds to state and territory arts departments. In 2001 there was a big increase in money for the major performing arts

⁶ See the two Big Picture research reports: M. Kessler, *Museums, Regional Galleries* and M. Kessler, *Commercial Gallery Sector*

organisations as a result of the Nugent Report from both federal and state/territory governments and another increase for the visual arts and craft sector in 2003 following the Myer Inquiry. Regional arts also attracted very substantially increased levels of funding.⁷

During the late seventies, state and territory governments established their own arts funding sections. Over the decade of the nineties, the relative share of Commonwealth arts funding declined as that of state and local governments increased. As an example of the steady decrease in value of Federal Government funding for the visual arts/crafts since the establishment of the Australia Council, at the close of 2002 the level of funding was the same as it had been in 1993-94 with its real value eroded by inflation. However, the promised 2005/6 and 2006/7 funding increase of \$12 million per annum agreed as a result of the Myer Inquiry will help to reverse this slide.⁸

While the arts industry has developed a multi-million dollar infrastructure since the Australia Council was first established in 1973, the average annual income derived by the majority of practitioners from their arts and crafts practice remains well below the poverty line. Astonishingly, this situation has deteriorated over thirty years of public and private support. Artists remain inadequately remunerated for their services. At the time of writing, artists are campaigning for a minimum artists' fee of \$2,000 for a solo exhibition of their work in public galleries or \$500 each for a group show. They want to see evidence that the Myer funding increase will result in the restoration of standard exhibition fees and are calling for this to be mandated by government through the funding authorities. The Sydney Art Seen Society organised protests and a petition to this effect in August-September 2004, asking that artists' fees be prioritised over other museum budget items such as publicity and administration. Calls have also again been made for the re-establishment of an artists' representative union, While NAVA provides representation on these matters, it does not have the capacity to negotiate industrial awards. The second edition of the Code of Practice for the Australian Visual Arts and Craft Sector published by NAVA in 2004 contains both a schedule of recommended artist loan fees and rates for artists for creating site specific or ephemeral works for temporary exhibition in public galleries. These schedules provide recommended minimum rates for a variety of different circumstances and were a useful reference for the Australia Council in negotiating contracts with organisations in receipt of increased funding through the contemporary Visual Arts and Craft Strategy (resulting from the Myer Inquiry).

Our research brought home to us that the visual arts and craft are low in the pecking order and they have less lobbying power and get very much less attention than the performing arts. Within the Australia Council and the state arts funding authorities, the performing arts have always been pre-eminent and support for all other the artforms including the visual arts and craft has been comparatively much lower. Over the last few years, increasingly urgent and repeated calls for action were being made by lobby groups, particularly the National Association for the Visual Arts (NAVA), which were becoming very concerned at the parlous state in which visual arts and craft practitioners and

⁷ See M. Travers, Big Picture research report *Federal Government*

⁸ *Ibid*

contemporary organisations were finding themselves. Other studies (Throsby and Hollister)⁹ were showing that the incomes of practitioners have been falling for twenty years, and anecdotally it was clear that the infrastructure organisations were less and less able to sustain a viable support base for practitioner and audience demand. Prior to the new injection of funding resulting from the Myer Inquiry, falling income levels for the infrastructure organisations have been subsidised through low rates of staff pay.¹⁰ Except those working in public service jobs (for example, state galleries and federal and state arts funding bodies), most artworkers are not protected by unions and the structure of awards. This is increasingly resulting in the drain of experienced artworkers out of the arts industry and the resulting loss of knowledge and skill in the sector.

The negative impact of economic rationalism is most keenly felt by individual artists who are under pressure to apply their skills to some more predictable commercial outcome than the possibility that their personal art practice may result in high level sales and commissions.¹¹ Though there may be a public perception that artists rely heavily on government grants and social security for their survival, artists have always supported themselves and subsidised their art practice through taking on a great variety of paid work both drawing on their arts skills and in other unrelated jobs. It is observable that younger artists are more entrepreneurial in applying their skills in ways that will earn them income from a great variety of sources. Indeed in the recent research finding of *The Visual Arts Industry Guidelines Research Project*, one of the research partners, the Australian Centre for Industrial Relations Research and Training (ACIRRT), observed that artists were exemplars of new work practices that they predicted would become the norm for the whole community. This was characterised by a variety of simultaneous or serial forms of work ranging from short-term employment, commissions, independent and grant supported projects, to selling art work and specialist services and running a small business and when necessary taking on Work for the Dole ‘mutual obligation’ work or undertaking training programs. By living on largely self generated income and paying the costs of their art practice, artists themselves greatly subsidise community cultural experience.

There have been ad hoc programs devised by governments in the ‘nineties intended to assist visual artists and craft practitioners to develop as small business enterprises, but these programs were not co-ordinated and some were quite short lived. The main efforts made to assist this form of cultural industry development were through the National Art and Craft Centres Industry Support Strategy (NACISS) for Indigenous art and craft centres, the never implemented Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Cultural Industry Strategy, the short lived Cultural Industry Development Program (CIDP), exports through the Visual Arts and Craft Export Scheme (VACES) and some forms of business training

⁹ Throsby D. and Hollister V. (2003) *Don't Give Up Your Day Job: An Economic Study of Professional Artists in Australia*, (Australia Council, Sydney)

¹⁰ See the following Big Picture research reports: B. French, *Contemporary Art Organisations* S.Walker-Haseman interviews, *Individual Artists*; S. Ostling, post-graduate interviews, *Education*

¹¹ See the following Big Picture research reports: S. Walker-Haseman, *Individual Artists*; B.French, *Contemporary Art Organisations*

which were facilitated through special NEIS programs.¹² The creation by the Australia Council of the Audience and Market Development Division, with funding transferred across from all art form Boards, has focussed on building "consumption" of art product. Increasingly state and territory governments have focussed on consumption and business development models of funding. There have also been studies of market attitudes published to influence approaches by practitioners to market building.¹³

Though the Copyright Act was legislated in 1968, artists were slow to recognise the importance of exercising their rights. However, during the 'nineties, intellectual property began to be recognised as a major potential source of income. In response to sector lobbying, several amendments have been made to the Act to expand its efficacy for visual creators. Intensive lobbying by NAVA resulted in the mid-nineties in the setting up of Viscopy, the visual arts copyright collection and distribution agency. It works to raise the consciousness in the industry of obligations to visual arts and craft copyright owners.¹⁴

Freelance teachers, curators and writers also have had to contend with the pragmatism of the marketplace. In the curatorial area, for instance, cutbacks in funding have meant that exhibitions are now conducted in-house in most museums and regional galleries. This has made it more difficult for freelancers (including artist-curators) to realise their exhibition and publication projects. This has a negative impact on the diversity of exhibitions, publications, training and employment opportunities in the industry.¹⁵ The original aims of excellence and access espoused by government funding bodies have been overshadowed by the increasingly reductive economic rationalist and careerist terms through which artists are asked to frame and account for their practice. These evaluative criteria come from non-art public service and business areas, and often do not reflect the processes of artistic and critical work.

There has been an increasing expectation for funded projects to result in an exhibition outcome, rather than open-ended research and experimentation. This has raised industry fears of standardisation of funded art projects and a further blurring of purpose between contemporary art organisations and commercial gallery exhibitions. There is a concomitant pressure for higher production value resources with the expectation of accompanying exhibition catalogues, website and/or on-line materials and other forms of publicity. Most smaller and regional galleries are not able to resource this increasing demand for standardised, quality exhibition 'product'.¹⁶

Prior to the Myer Inquiry, Visual Arts/Craft Board (VACB) trends included a slight increase in visual arts and craft funding overall, but in a diminishing VACB budget as funds moved across to other boards and sections of Council. Support for visual arts and

¹² See M. Kessler, Big Picture research report *Indigenous Arts* and M. Travers, Big Picture research report *Federal Government*

¹³ See M. Travers, Big Picture research report *Federal Government*

¹⁴ See M. Kessler, Big Picture research report *Indigenous Arts*

¹⁵ See Big Picture research reports: A. Geczy, *Education*, S. Walker-Haseman, *Individual Artists* M. Kessler, *Regional Galleries*

¹⁶ See M. Kessler, Big Picture research reports: *Regional Galleries*; S. Walker-Haseman, *Individual Artists*; interviews, B. French, *Contemporary Art Organisations*

craft infrastructure had been static since the 'nineties, with little capacity for the VACB to take on newer, emerging organisations, and the funded organisations were in danger of stagnating from lack of growth funding. In the ten years starting from the mid 'seventies, direct funding to visual artists and craft practitioners decreased dramatically from 48% to 29% of the total grants budget. Since then it has remained at around 25%¹⁷. There was an increase in support for international activities but a decrease in support for arts writing/publishing and relatively few major time buying grants for artists.¹⁸ Since the Australia Council restructure in the mid-nineties, it was no longer acting as a public advocate for industry standards, and since 1997, the VACB was no longer mandating payment of artists' fees or publishing scales of fees. This responsibility was regarded as being devolved to the field. The advocacy bodies' lobbying was assisted by the Council rather than the VACB in the areas of copyright, moral rights, resale royalty and Indigenous rights and this was done behind the scenes rather than through public pronouncements.

There was an increased focus on Asia from early to mid nineties consistent with the government's focus in other policy areas, for example the funding of the Asia Pacific Triennial (APT), the establishment of Asialink, residencies established in Asia, etc.

A level of increasing stratification developed from the early eighties, with a new, intermediate level of contemporary art space emerging with the growth of MCA, Potter, PICA, ACCA, IMA and Object to become more galleries of modern art, craft and design and less places of hands on support for artistic and curatorial experimentation. New service bodies and networks were created: in 1979 the largely unfunded and now defunct Art Workers Union, then in the mid-eighties, the Arts Law Centre of Australia, the National Association for the Visual Arts (NAVA), the Australian Exhibitions Touring Agency (AETA) and in the nineties – the National Exhibition Touring Service (NETS), the Australian Network for Art and Technology (ANAT), Viscopy, the visual arts, craft and design copyright collecting society and the now defunct National Indigenous Art Advocacy Association (NIAAA). The move in the mid nineties to a triennial grant structure gave greater stability for key infrastructure organisations (but the grants were not indexed). However, it was not all expansion and some infrastructure organisations were defunded — AETA, Museums Australia; or restructured — Craft Australia. What was also new was the support provided for meetings of cluster networks: COA, CAOs, and NETS. Indirect forms of support for artists included commissions, acquisitions, promotion overseas and residency costs.

After the Myer Inquiry, the VACB increased its influence though negotiating with state and territory arts funding authorities over how to manage the increased funding for the Visual Arts and Craft Strategy. If the currently proposed changes proceed, the VACB is poised to expand in taking over responsibility for managing 86% of the New Media Arts Board's funding. It is also proposed that the Key Organisations section will take over liaison with the triennially funded organisations but the funding responsibility is to remain with the VACB.

¹⁷ See M. Travers Big Picture research report *Australia Council*

¹⁸ Ibid

Globalisation

Not surprisingly, with the changes in communication and transport technology, international contact has increased greatly in the last twenty years. However, in terms of international relations, it is still the case that the primary interest of the government through the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT) is in cultural activities serving diplomatic and trade objectives. Even so, governments have a relatively unsophisticated understanding of the role that could be played by the arts in facilitating better accord between countries and enhancing the commercial value of goods which are sought on the basis of their cultural distinctiveness.¹⁹

Sadly, there has been little sustained whole-of-Government support for international projects, and a communications gap remains between government departments. The only programmatic whole-of-government activity in relation to globalisation and the visual arts has been Foreign Affairs Minister Alexander Downer's International Cultural Council. Its activities though have been relatively minor and bear no comparison in scale or sophistication with international cultural promotional organisations like for example the Goethe Institute or the Australia Japan Foundation. There has, however, been sporadic Austrade activity through the Australia Council Export Strategy initiative.²⁰ This was reviewed during the time of writing, and changes have been made to try to assist private galleries in their overseas marketing and promotional efforts. It is to be hoped that the recent appointment of a Cultural Officer in DFAT may also have some greater impact.

The greater consciousness of a global world has found artists increasingly collaborating with overseas colleagues on joint projects and exhibitions, exploiting the possibilities of communication technology and its capacity for interactivity. The Australia Council too has increasingly focused on international activity. In the last decade the amount expended on international projects increased by twenty percent.

From the late 'eighties, the interest of artists in Asia expanded rapidly. This was greatly facilitated by the creation of the Asialink program and various forms of Australia Council support. This was happening in the context of the Labor government's realigning of Australia's focus towards recognising its position in the region. Many state and regional museums have responded imaginatively to economic pressures and framed their international activity within the region.

Since the end of the 'eighties, the potential of both domestic and international cultural tourism has grown and been developed through the efforts of both government and the Australia Council. Of particular interest to tourists are Indigenous visual arts and craft. With the influx of foreign copies, the issue of entrenching systems for verifying

¹⁹ based on Big Picture interview with Christopher Hodges, Director, Utopia Gallery, unpublished

²⁰ See M. Travers, two Big Picture research reports: *Federal Government*, and *Australia Council*

Indigenous authenticity is still to be satisfactorily resolved. But the potential for cultural tourism is still a rich well of opportunity waiting to be fully realised.²¹

In a competitive international education market, art schools and universities are competing for international fee-paying students, particularly postgraduates. They are developing distance education/on-line education packages (with potential international markets), flexible course delivery (summer, & winter schools, workshops and internships, on-line education), more flexible degree paths and more flexible and inclusive accreditation and credit exchange for courses. The education sector hosts international staff and student exchanges and research projects, particularly within the Asia-Pacific region, and the work of Asialink. This dovetails with the Australia Council's promotion of regional exhibitions, artists' residencies and studios.²²

The formation of the Australian Coalition for Cultural Diversity (ACCD) at the beginning of 2003 saw extremely active and co-ordinated lobbying of the Federal Government by a broadly representative group of peak bodies representing all artform areas. The ACCD's purpose was to try to ensure that Australia's cultural production continued to be nurtured and protected against swamping by US cultural products resulting from the pervasive size and strength of their cultural industry mechanisms. Already a very substantial proportion of films, books, music etc consumed in Australia is from the US. The full impact of the Australian FTA with the US on the arts sector remains to be seen and will become more evident over time as technological change in production and delivery occurs. However, the film and TV sectors, which are reputed to be worst affected, have been trying to negotiate a compensation package from government.

The issue of the right of all countries to maintain and develop distinctive cultural practices and products and to see them reach their audiences and clients is causing great concern around the world as the US brokers other free trade agreements in which cultural production and distribution is bargained over. Coalitions in other countries have been formed to try to halt this trend and a preliminary draft Convention on Cultural Diversity is being developed for adoption by UNESCO. The Convention is meant to protect each country's ability to make media and cultural policy that favours cultural diversity — for example, strong support for public service, non-profit, and community media; local ownership requirements; language requirements; dedicated airtime for local films and music; grants and support for local musicians, filmmakers, and other cultural workers, and a range of other measures. If successful, the convention could provide a legal defence against attacks on media and cultural diversity under free trade deals.

Technological Change

Globalisation has been driven by communications technologies. These inter-twined historical forces have had a massive impact upon the visual arts and craft. Artists report an increased level of international communication between artists and a higher level of networking, exchange and presentation of work overseas (as mentioned above).

²¹ See M. Kessler, Big Picture research report: *Indigenous Arts*

²² See S. Ostling, Big Picture research report: *Interviews, Education*

All Big Picture research reports indicate that over the past fifteen years visual artists and craftspeople have increasingly availed themselves of the new media: through it they have connected themselves to the world and incorporated it into their multi-media and hybrid productions. In the absence of widely available training in these media, there has been a strong element of autodidacticism and anarchic development. With the emergence of stable platforms and industry standards for hardware and software, the situation has settled down: training, partnerships and national and international associations of new media artists are now commonplace. Two distinct types of artists have emerged, those with access to sophisticated equipment and processes (large format digital prints, multi-projector LCD installations, etc.) and those using low cost equipment and processes (web-based art, digital video, ink-jet printers and the like).

Increasingly artists working in new media claim that it is a distinct form of practice arising particularly from its multidisciplinary, time based and interactive characteristics. Australian policy and practice have been internationally admired, making contentious the proposed closure (in 2005) of the Australia Council's New Media Arts Board.

By far the most consistent and problematic issue raised by our research in this area is the inability of individuals and organisations to properly resource themselves with the hardware and software needed for the production and display of artworks. A vast amount of money has been spent in upgrading incompatible and obsolete technology. While the price of both hardware and software continue to fall, the cost of high-end presentation and graphics rendering equipment remains high. The proposal in the Myer Inquiry Report for an IT Bank was intended to offer some solution to this problem. Further investigation was undertaken through a consultancy commissioned by the Australia Council. However, the results were never made public and the government did not take up the idea. The challenge remains however, and the Australian Council for University Art and Design Schools (ACUADS) signalled its interest in its member bodies becoming the sites for the provision of these facilities if the government could be persuaded to provide the required financial support and/or broker relationships with the IT industry.

Copyright issues, which were intended to be settled by the Copyright (Digital Agenda Act) of 2001 (where copyright in digital media was brought into line with traditional ones) are still contentious even after the three-year review of the Act. The findings have been called into question by the arts sector. The cost of recovery (through legal action) of copyright payments in cases of infringement is high and, in the debate over digital rights on the Internet, the rights of artists to earned income are pitted against the interests of the public—who tends to see the Web as a "free" resource. Within the debates over "creative commons" some argue that the withholding of access to material by copyright owners who are not the creators, is a form of censorship.

There has been a strong, but faltering and under-resourced, movement to digitise gallery and museum holdings and to place them on the Web for information and education purposes. This has been a challenge to the way galleries administer their collections, because of copyright implications and expenses. At the same time museums and galleries

have implemented interactive displays and have increased their popularity with the public by using technological aids to create gallery experiences resembling other 'infotainment' leisure pursuits.²³

In education there has been no slackening of demand for courses in new media and multimedia studies.²⁴ While these have not yet redefined what is meant by an art school education, the task was being taken up by QUT in the establishment of a Faculty of Creative Industries to redefine the role of the artists in the "new economy" by forging new links with business.

Community Attitudes

Public attitudes towards the visual arts, which either inform or are informed by official attitudes, verge on the schizophrenic: it is a case of "national treasures" versus "contemporary art charlatans". While a few famous artists are treated like superstars, there is also an occasional controversy whipped up by the popular media implying that contemporary art practice is inaccessible nonsense and that artists are just self indulgent and should get real jobs.

The kerfuffle over the collection policy in the House of Parliament—where a long-standing policy of purchasing works of living, emergent to mid-career artists was overturned in 2004 in favour of (traditional) works by dead artists—is a perfect case in point. The sums of money expended to house the country's visual patrimony seems lavish when compared to the shamefully meagre funds that are reserved to be doled out under terms of strict accountability, to living, practising artists.

Though arts activity in Australia has grown exponentially in the last thirty years, compared with many other countries in the world particularly "old world" countries, it still has a comparatively low status. Art is perceived by a significant proportion of the community as a commodity or another form of entertainment. This means that governments pay comparatively little attention to the state of health of and potential for development of the arts. This is exemplified by the lack of reference to the importance of the arts in public political rhetoric, the lack of personal commitment by most politicians, and the absence of any overarching legislation that recognises the value of the contribution made by artists to Australian life. This has had an impact on the way that advocates "argue" the arts, trying to use the language and values base of monetarism.

Its lack of thorough integration in the school curriculum has meant that most people are not educated to understand the language or intentions of art and craft practice and its role in exploring and articulating ideas, values and the meaning of human experience. In the school curriculum, visual communication is being neglected in favour of the more traditional areas of learning.²⁵ Logically it can be deduced that this results in a lack of interest and understanding in the adult population. The arts sector has been lobbying for

²³ See M. Kessler and B. French Big Picture research report: *State and National Galleries*

²⁴ See A. Geczy Big Picture research report: *Education*

²⁵ Ibid

this to be redressed citing the rapid escalation in the use of visual tools and subject matter in communication generally, for example, video streaming to mobile phones, digital photography, film, computer graphics and animation, advertising, music videos, visual spectacle at major events like the Olympic games and so on. It is argued that visual communication has become as important an area of skill as literacy and numeracy. This has recently been acknowledged by the government in allocating up to \$250,000 in 2004 for a study into changes needed in visual education across the board from preschool to tertiary levels including an evaluation of the contribution through “informal” education by galleries and others to lifelong learning.

However, there is growing art and design consciousness amongst the under forties, to whom art has been promoted in the media as a lifestyle commodity and an indicator of status. New commercial schemes are proliferating to capitalise on this new consumer group, for example the Affordable Art Fair, gallery malls (the Danks Street complex in Sydney), travelling or on-line art galleries, agents showing works in display homes and apartments for clients to purchase as a package, dealers trading all-one-price art works, cheap reproductions which can simulate originals to a remarkable degree and fakes.

Blockbuster exhibitions, festivals and Biennale-style activities remain an important drawcard for the visual arts community and the general public. Increasingly, however, these events have a sharper regional or thematic focus, and often showcase new ways of using technology and offering free admission to maximise accessibility and to broaden the reach and scope of events. For public galleries, their dilemma is whether the main purpose of the institution is one of education or entertainment. In response to the pressure of having their value judged on the basis of audience numbers rather than the quality of curatorial scholarship, they offer audiences a bewildering range of choices and array of associated activities and services.²⁶

Along with the popularising of art, there is also the downside of community disapprobation. When artists deal with sensitive subject matter or use confronting or non-standard modes of presentation, at times some elements in the community can be extremely censorious. Indeed interest groups have been known to make serious threats against artists’ personal safety and that of the artworks, an example being Andres Serrano’s ‘Piss Christ’. The closure of this major exhibition at the NGV and many other exhibitions at the insistence of state, metropolitan and local governments, as well as the increased powers of the Australian Broadcasting Authority over the content of the Internet are evidence of a trend towards censorship. The threat of net censorship is a serious one to Australian artists who work in this medium, since all content on Australian sites without password protection is required to be suitable for children under the age of eighteen. Self-censorship can be exercised by artists or gallery directors, the cancellation of the “Sensation” exhibition at the ANG being a case in point. Appropriate ways of dealing with freedom of expression issues have never been well developed in Australia, the decision often being left to the police for lack of any expert point of reference or agreed forms of protection through, for example, a Bill of Rights.

²⁶ See M. Kessler, Big Picture research report: *Festivals and Events*

PROPOSITIONS

Proposition 1 – Research and Cultural Policy Development

1.1 On a continuing basis, it is proposed that the Federal Government produce comprehensive cultural policies that are updated regularly (every three to five years) of which the visual arts and craft sector interests would be an integral part.

1.2 These policies would advance the development of Australian visual arts and craft nationally and internationally. They would be derived on the basis of conclusions drawn from continuing research. This research could build on that done for the Contemporary Arts and Craft Inquiry (the Myer Inquiry), other statistical and empirical surveys and analyses like those produced by the Australian Bureau of Statistics under the umbrella of the Cultural Ministers Council (CMC), the Australia Council (including the Throsby reports) and independent research such as this Big Picture project. Regular consultation with the visual arts and craft sector as part of this arts industry-based research would greatly enhance its quality and applicability.

1.3 The value of this research would be increased if all arts policy and funding bodies, federal, state and local, regularly assessed the outcomes of their programs and used an analysis of this material to inform their future policy development. This could also include the Cultural Ministers' Council and the Australia Business Arts Foundation. Periodically, detailed independent studies could add another dimension and be used towards the same purpose.

Background

Government policies in relation to visual culture often take ideological positions though these are sometimes surprisingly inconsistent with what would be expected from particular political parties. For example, the change from a Labor to a Coalition government in 1996 saw funding cuts to the Australia Council's core funding in real terms. However, the Coalition government's positive response to the recommendations of the Myer Inquiry report has seen the biggest injection of new money into the sector since the establishment of the Australia Council in the mid 1970s, and will undoubtedly lead to substantial improvements in the sector over the four years of its allocation and hopefully into the future, if it becomes the new benchmark. In addition to the funding, a number of recommendations for legislative and regulatory change are being considered and lobbied for by the industry. This includes the need for attention to be paid to the issues of artists' fees and art education (visual literacy of the community and for professionals, the pathways through education and into the industry).

To ensure that policies of all entities are well founded, the sector continues to lobby both for a national cultural policy framework within which new policy positions are

initiated, and regular research and analysis of the environment within which these programs are taking place, and the outcomes of the programs themselves which would reveal their efficacy or otherwise. Until now, this has never been done consistently or systematically.

Proposition 2 — Government Approach

2.1 Support for the visual arts and craft sector would be greatly enhanced through a whole-of-government approach being taken which draws into a policy development and funding partnership, all other Federal Government departments including: Treasury, Foreign Affairs and Trade, Employment, Education and Training, Youth Affairs, Regional Affairs, Tourism, Science and Technology, Aboriginal Affairs, Small Business, Industrial Relations, Social Services and Health.

2.2 Beyond what is recommended by the Myer Inquiry report, greater co-ordination of policy and funding responsibilities are needed between the three levels of government.²⁷ Between governments there can be conflicting expectations. Reinstatement of the federal/state "round table" process which ended in 1995 would help to achieve this co-ordination.

Background

There are cross-sectoral interest, interdisciplinarity and partnerships evident between arts and education, science, health, environment, tourism, community development, urban design, advertising and heritage interpretation. Links are being made in every imaginable area. This has led to a call for a whole of government approach to arts support and policy development. As well as wanting arts objectives to be integrated across a range of human activity, the arts are often pressed to supplement their income from these other sources. In the past, the arts has tried to expand their area of influence by courting other government departments, such as education, employment, foreign affairs, tourism and Indigenous affairs, but success usually has been short-lived.²⁸ These approaches continue, however, and some mechanisms are currently in place which facilitate this (for example, Federal Government's Indigenous Arts Development Policy and Action Plan 2003).

Increasingly over the last twenty years there have been a number of specific areas of art practice on which governments at all levels have had an influence. In particular, the growth of public art, mainly commissioned by state and local governments but also in new commercial building developments, has been stimulated by the introduction of

²⁷ The Myer Inquiry Report recommendations were intended "to ensure that government support for the contemporary visual arts and craft sector is well targeted and well coordinated where appropriate across jurisdictions... the Commonwealth and State funding agencies...(should)...enter into more collaborative and coordinated arrangements, including tripartite funding arrangements in respect of their joint support of the key infrastructure organisations currently receiving triennial funding"

²⁸ See M. Travers, Big Picture research report: *Federal Government*

various state and metropolitan public art policies and infrastructure development and percent for art schemes which generate an economy for commissioning.²⁹ The strong appeal of public art to governments is worthy of separate analysis in itself.

Proposition 3 – Increased Secure Funding Benchmark

3.1 The economic sustainability of the sector needs to be ensured through an increase in the current level of government funding overall. The Federal Government needs to sustain its other levels of commitment and increase its Visual Arts and Craft Strategy contribution to at least \$9 million a year (currently matched by the increase of \$6 million from the states and territory governments) to reach the \$15 million funding level proposed by the Report of the Myer Inquiry and estimated by the National Visual Arts and Craft Network (NVACN) as the minimum needed for sustainability. This would need to be the new benchmark for 2005 to which annual indexation is added and from which future funding increases are negotiated.

3.2 From 2006/7, in acknowledgement of the major contribution made by artists to the cultural and economic life of the country, and to counteract the falling level of artists' incomes (Throsby 2003 and Travers, 2002) the Big Picture recommends a further increase in grants to artists beyond that allocated as a result of the Myer Inquiry to at least the level in real terms allocated when the Australia Council was established.

Background

The last decade has seen the broad re-thinking of business and state enterprises and the radical revision of economic rationalist doctrines. Economists now stress the importance of 'externalities' in planning and evaluating business and state enterprises. Much effort has gone into devising ways to measure, in dollar terms, those intangible social, environmental and cultural effects of the enterprise. Economists also acknowledge the problems that have arisen in many sectors when those externalities are not taken into account.

The position now facing the country's economists is thoroughly familiar to those working in the visual arts and craft industry. It has guided the establishment of most of the major arts institutions. It informs art school curricula and the entrepreneurial work of art galleries and artist-run initiatives. Since the early 1980s, arts economists have constructed evaluative frameworks that encompass not only market turnover but also those "externalities" of the arts and crafts industry. This fact needs to be reiterated in the face of chronic federal and state under-funding and narrow accounting criteria of 'cost recovery' and 'user pays'. By the same token, artists and arts advocates should continue researching and arguing more integrated social, cultural economic frameworks for valuing the arts.

²⁹ On regional issues, see M. Kessler Big Picture research report: *Regional Galleries*

There are various ways in which government policy influences the economy of the visual arts and craft sector especially through legislation and regulation. The impact is on both visual artists and craftspeople and on their support organisations.

Economic avenues:

i) Direct grants assistance

There are various forms of government assistance provided through grants to both individuals and organisations.

ii) Indirect assistance

For visual artists and craft practitioners, this can take many forms including tax and social security but also special assistance with provisions that have been put in place for the workforce generally. Organisations also benefit from tax provisions particularly the not-for-profits.

iii) Private sector assistance

This is stimulated by provision of incentives for corporate sponsorship and philanthropy.

iv) Self generated income

This income is generated by organisations and by artists and craft practitioners themselves. For practitioners this income is from four major sources: the sale of original art/craft works, loan fees or fees for work commissioned for public exhibition, the provision by visual artists and craftspeople of their professional services and copyright licensing income. For organisations it now derives from a great variety of commercial activity and service provision.

v) The economy of formal and informal education

This is also of great significance in being able to deliver effective training in visual cultural history and theory, interpretation, research, applied skill and professional practice training to practitioners, community participants, clients and audiences.

The Big Picture research papers paid more attention to the issue of direct government funding than the other four categories, and this is reflected in the discussions below.

Direct Government Grants Assistance

Each of the three levels of government contributes direct financial assistance to the visual arts and craft sector and in 1999-2000 this was estimated in the Myer Report to be \$58 million. These figures indicated that the greatest support comes from local government, then state and territory and finally the commonwealth. Because of the increase in funding as a result of the Myer Inquiry, this order will have changed with the commonwealth and state increasing their annual contributions starting with \$6 million rising to \$12 million in the third and fourth years. This represents an increase of approximately 20% of the previous funding overall. The visual arts and craft sector itself and Myer had both recommended a minimum increase of \$15 million per annum (with the arts sector adding the requirement for annual indexation). This would have represented an increase of about 26% of the 2000 allocation.

Commonwealth Government

Through the Australia Council, previously through ATSIC and more intermittently through DCITA and other government departments, direct financial assistance is offered

both through grant programs which have formal processes and through "out of time" or entrepreneurial approaches. In 1999 - 2000 this was estimated in the Myer Report to be \$18.3 million.

The Myer funding has reversed what had been a steady decrease in the value of visual arts/craft funding over the previous decade. At the close of 2002, the level of funding was the same as in 1993-94 in real terms.

There was an overall decline in Australia Council VACB funding in real terms of \$1.93 million from the late 1980s to 2003.

This decline was uneven in its effects:

- funding priorities shifted to a greater emphasis on the global with support for international projects increasing by 25%, with a 6% increase in funding for artists to work overseas, mainly in the studio residency scheme (see Globalisation Working Paper)
- individual grants remained at 1980s levels in real terms, and the number of grants gradually reduced
- there was a five-percent drop in the Australian projects category
- fellowships remained the same (a one percentage point variation) which meant a drop in real terms
- infrastructure support declined by 25% in this period
- support for writing and publishing plummeted

State/Territory Governments

Myer reports that in 1999-2000 the funding contribution from state and territory governments was \$19.5 million. The Big Picture project undertook research into state and territory government funding to compare levels in 92/93 against levels for 99/2000. This indicated that the contribution to art galleries rose while that for grants for the rest of the categories fell in real terms. All the major state galleries have undertaken significant expansion over the last thirty years, with Victoria, NSW and Queensland recently making major extensions and improvements. The "Other" funding category included grants to individuals and was ten percent of the level of funding for the galleries.

Public art programs became significant areas of commissioning in most states starting with Tasmania and SA in the eighties, WA being very active from the early the nineties establishing a cross departmental committee. Queensland took an active role in the late 'nineties, stimulated by the important work of the Queensland Artworkers Alliance in establishing an employment agency, followed by a government initiative "*Art Built In*" set up to manage state government public art projects. This was made more possible by the introduction of a mandated allocation of 2% *for Art* from development budgets. NSW became active in preparation for the 2000 Olympic Games though a deal of this work was commissioned by Sydney City Council. In Victoria much public art is supported by Melbourne City Council and local governments. Various local Percent for Art schemes provide the budget for this work.

Local Government

No specific research has been able to be included in this project though statistics from the Myer Inquiry Report indicated that local government contributed \$20.4 million in 2003. While, this is often in the form of capital works funding, and money for festivals and community cultural development projects, an important area of local commitment has been major growth in the number of regional galleries established and maintained, especially in NSW, Victoria and Queensland. As councils take on the task of cultural planning their funding allocations may increase.³⁰

Proposition 4 — Arts Funding Authorities.

4.1 To ensure that there is no suspicion of undue political influence, it is important that the arms length from government status and peer assessment process of the Australia Council is respected and sustained and its independent policy advisory role maintained by the Federal Government to ensure that its expertise informs government policy development.

4.2 For the reason above, the Big Picture believes that it would be advantageous for all government arts programs currently managed by DCITA to be devolved to the control of the Australia Council including the Indigenous programs previously managed by ATSI.

4.3 The Big Picture also believes that the Australia Council's policy development role would benefit from expanded research, analysis and industry consultation and partnership, and the art sector would benefit from greater transparency in the Council's decision making and reporting processes.

4.4 The relevance and currency of all arts funding bodies could be assisted by having an equitable balance of appropriate strategist, peer and artist representation in all funding, policy and administrative contexts.

4.5 Arts policy bodies at all levels could gain valuable industry responses to their research reports and policy evaluations by publishing them electronically, especially if they were first released in draft form inviting comment.

4.6 The Big Picture believes that the VACB's policy development role would be enhanced by its working in partnership with representative arts industry networks and advocacy bodies through regular consultation and joint strategic planning sessions. Individual and organisational reporting provides valuable source material, which if researched and analysed, could be better drawn on for policy development purposes.

³⁰ See M. Kessler, Big Picture research report: *Regional Galleries/Smaller Public Galleries*

Background

Since its establishment in the mid 1970s, the Australia Council as an institution has provided the backbone of support for the growth and development of the whole sector. Under the latest Coalition Federal Government, the core funding of the Council has diminished, however four areas of political interest received new focused funding support. From 1996, specially earmarked funds for regional development, music, festivals and youth programs were devolved to the Australia Council. This led to policy development and project activity in these areas by the Australia Council, and through devolved funds to state and territory arts departments. More recently, funds were earmarked for young and emerging artists, international representation for artists and boosting of support to small to medium arts organisations.³¹

From time to time there has existed some suspicion and rivalry between the federal arts department and the Australia Council. Responsibility for certain areas of policy and funding have flipped between the Australia Council and the federal arts department. For example, in the mid 'nineties the Council took over responsibility from DCITA for opera and ballet companies with the concomitant transfer of funds. However, this did not represent a funding increase, but rather an increase in the scope of the Council's responsibilities.

In the past, the Australia Council expended much greater resources on direct contact and consultation with the arts sector. However, cuts to its administration budget have seen this seriously diminished, though in 2005 there is a proposal in its restructure that artform board directors should provide a better link to the field. From the mid-nineties, much of the policy development role was removed from the artform boards and vested in the Council. A degree of uniformity was imposed across all programs which gave less credence to the substantial differences between artform practices. The Big Picture believes that the validity of policy development suffered as a result of these changes. Also the Council's reporting of its decisions is now much harder to penetrate, partly because many of the figures are no longer disaggregated.

In recent years the pre-eminent policy and funding role of the Australia Council has diminished with the expansion of programs and funds managed by DCITA, the rise of the state and territory arts funding authorities and interest of local and metropolitan governments, and the initiatives and campaigns undertaken by key arts industry organisations both independently and in partnership. Government funding increases have resulted from some of these campaigns (for example, Nugent, Myer, Indigenous art and craft centres, small to medium organisations, regional arts). Legislative and policy changes have been vigorously lobbied for by arts industry organisations with some

³¹ See M. Travers, Big Picture research reports, *Federal Government*, and *Australia Council*. It is not clear whether this small to medium organisations category includes visual arts and craft organizations. At the same time, the CAOS sector surveys indicate that the Australia Council has become a minor player in CAOS sector funding. See B. French, Big Picture *Contemporary Art Organisations (CAOS) Survey*

success (for example, tax, copyright and the establishment of Viscopy and moral rights) and new industry codes have been established (*Code of Practice for the Australian Visual Arts and Craft Sector* and *Valuing Art, Respecting Culture: Protocols for Working with the Australian Indigenous Visual Arts and Craft Sector*). It therefore seems timely for more effort to be made to build a strong partnership relationship between all the key stakeholders.

Proposition 5 – Visual Arts, Craft and Design Education

5.1 The Big Picture believes that visual literacy has become an essential skill in contemporary society. To achieve this, a comprehensive research project (funded by the Federal Government and the Australia Council in 2005) is intended to provide best practice models and an analysis of what is the shortfall in current education provision and how to remedy it. The findings of this research will need to be implemented.

5.2 Agreements are needed between state and territory governments to co-ordinate the visual arts and craft history, theory and practice syllabus and integrate it as a mandatory component of the school curriculum at both primary and secondary levels. It needs to be given equivalent attention and time to language literacy and mathematical studies.

5.3 The quality of training for art teachers needs to be substantially improved. These teachers need to be provided with a solid background in art and craft history, theory and practice.

5.4 Schools need to have access to an artists-in-schools program and be funded to give their students regular access to a range of cultural stimuli including excursions to galleries.

5.5 If Australian cultural innovation is to flourish, the chronic cuts to higher education funding must be reversed to allow the evident capability and creative energy of Australian visual artists and craftspeople to be trained and applied fruitfully, including in the area of new technologies.

5.6 To ensure that visual arts and craft training is sustainable, tertiary education institutions need to be funded to achieve: adequate staffing levels including the ability to hire professional art practitioners as sessional staff; a richness and diversity of courses available in all mediums; and recognition by universities of art practice by academic staff as research.

5.7 All art schools need to provide thorough professional practice training which adequately prepares graduates to be able to deal with the practical aspects of their professional enterprise.

Background

Visual arts and craft education has never had sufficient emphasis in the primary school curriculum. In many metropolitan and regional areas, parents are paying extra for private after-school classes in art and craft to make up this gap in their children's education. This lack is amplified in senior school, where, for example, in NSW the HSC 3 Unit Art option has been removed, and art does not carry the weight of other humanities subjects such as history and english. This lack of encouragement leads to the perception held by many school students that art and craft practice and art history are not desirable career paths. Concern over the lack of comprehensive and nationally co-ordinated visual literacy and visual arts and craft training lead the National Association for the Visual Arts (NAVA) to form an Art Education Group to campaign for research to be undertaken into the state of this training provision at all levels across the country. Its concern was the need for visual literacy in the community generally and for appropriate pathways through school and higher education for professional arts practitioners, Late in 2004, the Department of Education, Science and Training (DEST) and the Australia Council gave matching funding to a total of \$250,000 for this research to be undertaken.

The scope of the research also was intended to examine the provision of informal education by a range of institutions, particularly galleries. Big Picture Regional Gallery and State Museums research reports reveal the 'flow-on' pressure felt by the decline in art teaching at primary and secondary schools. One gallery specifically reported the extra responsibilities placed on its public education programs from schools and parents, in order to make good that lack. School visits to galleries for viewing exhibitions, attending talks and participating in practical workshops should complement, but never be a substitute for a broad and ongoing school-based visual education program.

In the study, gallery staff reported a general lowering of public knowledge of visual arts and crafts. They also noted that visitors appreciate any additional educational information provided, particularly lectures or talks. Specifically noted was the ignorance of most high school graduates of art history, theory and the role of art, which has meant that galleries have a negative educative platform on which to communicate.

The radical changes in higher education resulting from the Dawkins reforms of 1990 are still having a deleterious impact on visual arts and craft higher education. After art schools were amalgamated into universities a simplified system of academic measurement within DETYA meant that "creative" production was no longer recognised and exhibitions no longer accrued research points that would eventuate in competitive status and money for the university. "Creative" endeavors are not given acknowledgment within the DEST points system. Essentially the value of art practice as visual cultural research is not recognised within the text based paradigm of academic institutions. This disadvantages art schools staff in terms of their research quotient, qualifications, promotion, salaries etc. In terms of art itself, the location of art schools within the

university environment has resulted in a much greater emphasis being placed on the application of theory to practice.³²

Over recent years, staff and students in the tertiary education sector have regarded governments of both political complexions as having a diminishing commitment to education. The government introduction of university fees — both upfront fees and through the HECS system — has shifted much of the burden of responsibility for subsidy from government to students and their families. The election of the Coalition government in 1996 immediately saw the slashing of university funding. This has had serious consequences for art schools. These funding cuts have bitten into the universities' ability to maintain their levels of research commitment, range of course options, numbers of staff and therefore staff student ratios, induction of fresh academic talent, career pathways for staff, tutorial provision, academic entry requirements and standards. Increasing pressure towards vocational education is especially evident in the growing interest of students in training which may result in employment outcomes, for example, digital and other new media, photomedia, design and communications studies.³³

Art schools are specialising. Regional differences are being developed often taking advantage of local opportunities and links to business, for example: Tasmanian focus on fine wood and environmental arts, Newcastle on medical and scientific connections with art practice, University of Western Sydney with a ceramic laboratory experimenting with technology, Southern Cross also with a strong environmental focus, Woollongong's crafts and industrial and public art connections, Canberra with a community development brief, RMIT introducing a public art stream and the Northern Territory emphasising Indigenous practice and developing Northern Editions, a fine print facility with outreach training into Aboriginal communities.³⁴

The Create Report³⁵ reveals that in Australia vocational training has been heavily government driven, partnered with industry and influenced by other OECD countries. The trend began in Australia with the national training reform agenda in 1987, and has

³² For a range of opinions on this issue, see A. Geczy and S. Ostling Big Picture research reports, *Interviews, Education*

³³ *Ibid*

³⁴ *Ibid*

³⁵ Manidis M. (2001) *Creating a Position: Education, Training and the Cultural Industry*, Create Australia

continued since with a comprehensive range of national, state and industry initiatives including award restructuring, multi-skilling, the restructure of TAFE, labour market programs, key competencies and competency based training. A new Visual Arts Craft Design National Training Package has been developed by Create Australia and was launched in late 2003. It has a strong focus on industry expectations and employment targets. Some aspects of design have been located in manufacturing Industry Training Advisory Boards (ITABs) and its teachers are seeking the relocation of their subject within the "creative" sector which is seen to have a broader focus.

Theory is one of the aspects of higher education which distinguishes it from TAFE, but theory departments in art schools are either poorly staffed and/or research output is seldom a match for that of departments of art history and theory.³⁶ Now TAFE is beginning to incorporate some theory teaching and even higher degrees, so the differentiation between the two is diminishing. The differential in fee structures will put universities at a disadvantage. In some universities (Launceston, South Australia and Northern Territory) there is effective articulation and even merging of TAFE and university art teaching.³⁷

Proposition 6 – Artists’ Professional Status

6.1 The Big Picture believes that it is time for full recognition to be given to the professional role of visual artists and craftspeople through regular public endorsement by governments and the introduction of legislation by the Federal Government which recognises the tangible and intangible value provided by visual artists and craftspeople to Australia's wellbeing.

6.2 The legislation could use arts industry criteria as elaborated in the 2005 public income tax ruling *Carrying on a Business as a Professional Artist* as the basis for defining professionalism and thus be able to distinguish between the work of professional visual artists and craft practitioners and the activities of hobbyists.

6.3 The legislation could then be used as the reference point for all other legislation and regulation which impacts on visual artists and craftworkers’ professional lives, including other areas of taxation, rights (including copyright, resale royalties, freedom of expression and anti discrimination regulations), Indigenous and non-Indigenous cultural protocols, benefits and entitlements, superannuation, insurance, social security, grants and other forms of public and private sector income support.

6.4 This legislation would need to contain a definition of ‘artist’ and ‘artwork’ which is based on the intention of the creator and encompasses the

³⁶ See A, Gcezy, Big Picture research report, *Education*

³⁷ See S. Ostling, Big Picture research report, *Education*

**material realisation of the creator's efforts through the use of any medium/s
(not just the traditional ones currently specified).**

Background

The status of artists has remained marginal, and generally industry policies and the conditions they create have impacted adversely on artists. This conclusion was one of the major findings of the Visual Arts Industry Guidelines Research Project (VAIGRP). Advocacy bodies like the National Association for the Visual Arts, Viscopy, the Arts Law Centre of Australia and the Australian Copyright Council have worked both independently and together to address some of the key areas in need of change.

More generally, governments are not really responding effectively in policy terms to the radical changes in the nature of work taking place as the result of globalisation, technological change and the new economics. In 2001, the VAIGRP launched the results of its three years of research. As well as *The Code of Practice for the Australian Visual Arts and Craft Sector*, it produced a series of working papers and a policy document *Ideas for Policy and Legislation*. These papers made a series of strong recommendations about some of the changes which need to be made to government policy and legislation in order to ensure that artists and craft practitioners are not disadvantaged by the general rules governing the Australia work environment.

For artists, this is reinforced by the findings of the research paper *Don't Give Up Your Day Job: an Economic Study of Professional Artists in Australia* by David Throsby and Virginia Hollister. "...in today's labour market, traditional job structures and employment contracts are often swept aside in favour of more flexible employment arrangements. For example, instead of a long term commitment to a single mode of creative practice, we now see greater fluidity in artists' career paths. Artists may move in and out of artistic employment, engage in further training, accept short term contracts in or out of the arts, perhaps from time to time finding periods of uninterrupted work on their core creative practice". Their work can be in their arts practice, in other arts related areas like curatorship, teaching, writing, design etc and in non-arts activities. According to one of the VAIGRP partners, the Australian Centre for Industrial Relations Research and Training (ACIRRT), artists are at the vanguard of similar changes taking place in the whole workforce. The impacts are felt particularly in the areas of taxation, with the fluidity of artists working either serially in a number of self-employed, commissioned and casual, part-time or even fulltime employed relationships. This also impacts on other areas like transferable benefits and entitlements, social security, insurance, superannuation, health cover etc.

In the rules that govern industrial relations and work conditions, there are continuing inequities for visual arts and craft practitioners resulting from the lack of adequate definitions of "artist" and "artwork" in legislation over many years. There has been a lack of willingness by government and its authorities (especially the Australian Tax Office) to accept that the arts sector has particular characteristics and modes of practice which are different from but have equal legitimacy to other industry sectors. A UNESCO

recommendation for the Status of the Artist to be recognised through legislation has not been taken up in Australia despite continuing lobbying by the sector itself.

As many artists and craft practitioners have increasingly conceptualised themselves as working professionals³⁸, both directly and through their representative organisations, they have exerted pressure for their rights to be legislated and regulated. This has resulted in the introduction by government of a range of measures including changes to the Copyright Act and the introduction of artists' moral rights, income tax measures, and the crafting of arts policies with certain promises made during election years, some of which are fulfilled and others not.³⁹ Changes currently under negotiation include the introduction of an artists' resale royalty, Indigenous communal moral rights and exemption of artists from the Non-commercial Losses legislation. In January 2005, a public ruling was finally approved by the Australian Tax Office after eight years of negotiation, to clarify when artists can be understood to be in business and therefore claim the costs of their professional practice against all forms of income.

While the new tax ruling does provide valuable guidelines, the definitions of 'artist' and 'artwork' need to be generic enough to keep pace with both the methods adopted by artists in their practice and the variety of materials and forms they use. Technological change is having a particular impact on artists' practice, which is not accounted for in the definitions used in legislation.

Proposition 7 — Artists' Rights

7.1 The scope of legislated artist/craft practitioner rights need to be expanded to include those recommended by the Myer Inquiry report with the addition of clearly defined terms of protection of artists' freedom of expression.

7.2 It would be valuable for this to be reinforced by an intensive national educational campaign aimed at both practitioners and the users of their goods and services.

7.3 Governments needs to ensure that it is practicable for visual artists' and craftspeoples' rights to be enforced through providing better and more affordable access to justice.

³⁸ This concern over being defined as professional is not shared by all artists, nor is it an indication that the artwork produced by "professionals" will be of greater lasting significance than that created by "amateurs". However, those who choose the professional pathway expect industry conditions in line with other industries.

³⁹ A discussion of difficulties faced by Indigenous artists dealing with the current taxation regime is contained in a Big Picture interview with Utopia Gallery Director Christopher Hodges, unpublished

Background

Artists' status in Australia is still much more precarious than in most of Europe. Gradually, the various pieces of legislation which ensure rights for artists, are being introduced in Australia though it is a painfully laborious process. However, many rights remain to be dealt with.

Even when legislation is introduced, artists' rights continue to be abused partly because of lack of knowledge by the transgressors and partly because of the lack of access to justice experienced by artists. Most of the rights being sought by artists are recommended in the report of the Myer Inquiry and are being pursued by advocacy bodies. However, there were no recommendations in relation to artists' freedom of expression.

In expressing the will of the people, governments will at times produce policies and laws and administrative regulations that are disadvantageous to the arts sector. This is particularly true of the issue of censorship, which affects the visual arts from time to time though the banning of exhibitions or removal of individual works. The effect of a censorious cultural climate is to impose or encourage a regime of self-censorship among artists, curators and institutions. The cancellation of the *Sensation* show at the National Gallery of Australia demonstrated self-censorship at work and was thought by many in the arts sector to be a case of political interference with the program of the gallery.

The issue of freedom of expression remains erratically regulated. Undoubtedly as the public mood becomes more fearful and conservative, the arts is viewed with increasing suspicion. For example, in 2003 controversies were whipped up by talk back radio hosts over the Australia Council's funding of *Escape from Woomera*, a computer game which dealt satirically with the sensitive issue of the detention of asylum seekers. From time to time governments will carefully scrutinise funding for contentious elements. Usually the decision to remove works from public exhibition is left to the police who have no clear guidelines or rationale to guide their actions.

The Western Australian State government introduced censorship laws but appointed an expert reference committee to oversee its application. This seemed like a wise decision, to remove the onus on the police, who are most likely to err on the side of conservatism in being forced to make judgements about issues of public morality across the areas of blasphemy, sedition, obscenity or discrimination.

One of the most difficult issues to regulate is that of discrimination and vilification. Freedom to critique the philosophy and actions of a particular interest group would seem to be at the heart of the democratic principle, but the world's experience of the Holocaust has heightened community sensitivity to the possible consequences. So the boundaries remain blurred between intelligent critique and the fomenting of community prejudice. In the nineties, the rhetoric of One Nation's Pauline Hansen displacing Prime Minister Paul Keating's promotion of multiculturalism and reconciliation was to lift the lid on racism and xenophobia. Artists often enter these debates through their artwork.

Proposition 8 — Visual and Craft Artists' Incomes

8.1 The Big Picture strongly recommends that the Federal Government earmark a \$3 million increase in its funding (as called for in Recommendation 3) for the payment of artists' fees and exhibition costs

8.2 To ensure that artists receive some recompense for their efforts, the VACB needs once more to mandate the payment of fees to visual artists and craft practitioners by its funded organisations according to the scales published in the *Code of Practice for the Australia Visual Arts and Craft Sector, Edition 2*. In addition, the state and territory arts funding authorities and local governments need to follow suit.

8.3 A concerted education campaign by these government funding bodies is needed to persuade other major public and private sector users of artists' services to implement payment according to these schedules.

8.4 In order to ensure that these fee schedules maintain their currency and continue to set appropriate standards, funds need to be allocated to annually update existing schedules and develop new schedules as required by the sector.

8.5 To respond to the call from artists for the mandated payment of artists fees, round table discussions need to be organised to discuss the best way forward taking other pertinent factors into account.

8.6 A substantial increase by federal and state/territory governments is needed in the number of artist/craft practitioner fellowships given, at a level which provides a living allowance.

Background

For some years the Visual Arts/Craft Board of the Australia Council mandated the payment of artists' exhibition fees and loan fees in public exhibitions by publicly funded institutions. However, this ceased in 1997 and since then public galleries say that they have found it increasingly difficult to find the resources to pay artists these types of fees. Artists therefore are usually not paid or paid very little for providing viewers with live access to their work. There is an ad hoc system of galleries making a contribution to some of the costs involved, particularly for installations or work which is commissioned for an exhibition. This can include anything from covering the costs of materials and services, to paying for promotional materials and documentation or paying for opening costs. However, this seems to depend on the status and bargaining power of the artist and/or the financial wellbeing of the gallery.⁴⁰

⁴⁰ See B. French, two Big Picture research report *Contemporary Art Organisations*, and M. Kessler, *Artist-run Initiatives*

The income generating system for the performing arts is to charge the public for access to the experience of the performance of a work where large numbers of people pay to gather in a venue for the purpose. Currently it is not common for this to be paralleled in the visual arts. With the exception of special paying exhibitions in the major galleries, access to view the work of artists in exhibition and performance is almost always free based on an understanding that the community has already paid through taxes and it is very difficult to get the public to pay entry fees to exhibitions of contemporary work, particularly at the more experimental end of the spectrum. The outcome of the Federal Government's 2002/3 review of 15 major cultural organisations, which included the National Gallery of Australia and the National Portrait Gallery, was to continue not to require the payment of entry fees.

In 2000, the average VACB grant to the thirteen contemporary visual arts organisations studied that make up the CAOS network was \$110,154. The average State Government grant in 2000 was \$137,874. Income was also generated from other sources. The thirteen exhibiting organisations produced 272 exhibitions in that year. The Big Picture project found that in that year, artists' professional fees were \$36,722 and comprised nine percent of the total operating revenue. In the same year the work of a total of 1,729 artists was exhibited.⁴¹ If the fees were averaged, a very rough calculation would show that each artist would get \$21.24. Understanding that an exhibition might comprise weeks or months of preparation, and taking into account the costs of materials and transportation of artwork to the gallery the conclusion is that artists receive a token payment. However usually the gallery will provide artists with other kinds of in-kind support. Even so, the obvious conclusion is still that artists are very substantially subsidising the cost of the exhibition of their art in public galleries.

There has been acceptance of this industry norm, caused mainly by the previous lack of capacity of the contemporary art spaces to pay more. The recent increase in funding and the publication of recommended rates for Artists Fees and Exhibition Fees in the Code of Practice 2nd Edition, should provide the momentum to improve this situation in favour of artists. However, there is no doubt that when the VACB mandated fee payment according to their own published rates, artists were better remunerated.

The Artworkers Union principle of an adequately funded, regularly reviewed schedule of fees and contracts needs to be re-established. NAVA only secured once off project funding to do this work for the Code of Practice but continues to have primary responsibility for this role. In 2003 NAVA commissioned work on establishing loan fee and exhibition fee scales which were included with other recommended levels of pay in the Code of Practice 2nd Edition. However, governments or their funding bodies do not mandate these fees and therefore NAVA is not able to enforce the payment of adequate fees for artists and freelance artworkers. This issue is even more pressing for projects funded and administered outside of federal and state sectors. The Big Picture research indicates a need for an annual review of fee schedules and a commitment to their

⁴¹ See B. French, Big Picture research report *Contemporary Art Organisations*

mandating by the Australia Council and state arts funding authorities as a condition of any pertinent grant. Its discontinuation in 1997 thus absolved the Council of responsibility to seek budgetary increases to keep pace with industry developments. This compares unfavourably with the performing arts, which benefits from the work of trades union industrial officers, twice gaining increased government support when performers gained a wage increase through their award process.

Proposition 9 – Visual Arts & Craft Business Assistance

The Big Picture believes that there are several interdependent strategies, which would greatly assist artists to establish and maintain themselves in professional practice:

9.1 The Federal Government needs to provide bridging assistance (a sunrise industry start-up scheme) at least equivalent to the dole, for two years after graduation for graduates who are making demonstrable efforts to establish themselves in professional art/craft practice.

9.2 Better training of Centrelink staff is needed to ensure that they understand the specialised nature of work in the arts, similar to the PACE (Pathways to Arts and Cultural Employment) scheme operating in New Zealand.

9.3 The Federal Government needs to add ‘participation in arts projects’ to the current *Mutual Obligation* activities listed under ‘employment and community participation’. Then when artists are required to do *Work for the Dole* placements, they should be located in appropriate organisations or projects which will provide them with pertinent work experience and contacts.

9.4 The Federal Government needs to expand support for the NEIS scheme to develop specialised "small business" training for the visual arts and craft sector to assist practitioners to establish or consolidate their practice.

9.5 Each of the other state/territory governments needs to fund the establishment of a visual/craft artists' employment agency similar to those in existence in WA, Queensland and Tasmania.

9.6 The Federal Government needs to establish new entities to assist visual artists and craft practitioners to develop prototypes and find investment funds to achieve the manufacture and marketing of their designs, and to support the existing SA scheme *Applied Ideas* and the WA scheme *Designing Futures*.

Background

For most artists, the transition from training into practice is an extremely testing time with many of them ill prepared for survival. Professional practice is not taught consistently across all the art schools.⁴² Once students graduate, access to the training institution's equipment is no longer available and there is no financial buffer or business training to assist graduates to start up. Though previously the dole was sometimes used as the bridging mechanism, now Centrelink is unsympathetic to graduates' efforts to establish themselves. For some time, advocacy bodies have been trying to negotiate better arrangements to assist artists to stay in the profession rather than having to abandon their practice in order to earn sufficient income to survive.

A more sophisticated consideration is needed for the community to benefit from the skills of artists who are at times not able to generate income. In New Zealand the PACE scheme provides a good model for social security arrangements and could be emulated in Australia. The PACE scheme recognises and understands how people can use arts-based skills to get paid employment in related areas or other industries. Under PACE, artists can be registered as such, rather than having to select an alternative career and waste their arts skills and training. They can be better connected with art jobs and assisted into creative careers.

The work agencies in Queensland, WA and Tasmania which grew out of the opportunities generated by percentage for art schemes and the growth in public art, have now expanded their fields of operation. Similar agencies are needed in every state and territory to generate work for artists and provide them with continuing small business training. The NEIS training scheme also could be used to provide this specialised training.

In SA and WA, the craft organisations have developed excellent schemes to help practitioners to commercialise their designs and their products.

Sale of Artworks

In the majority of cases, the price for purchase of original art works and artists' services do not in any reasonable way reflect the expertise of their makers or the time involved in their conceptualisation, making and delivery processes (costs of exhibition and promotion). With the exception of a small proportion of very successful artists, visual artists and craft practitioners are very substantially underwriting the value gained by the community and purchasers or commissioners of the work.

While there are similarities between the visual arts and craft and other artform sectors in relation to copyright and service provision, the sale of original art works is very different from the system of sales of multiple copies of works which is the case with the book publishing industries and the capture of music and other performances on CD, video or DVD.

⁴² See S. Ostling, Big Picture research report, *Interviews, Education*

There are many ways in which artists and craft practitioners contrive to sell their artworks:

- self-managed from the studio, workshop, on Internet etc
- through the assistance of a commercial gallery or dealer
- through self-managed artist-run spaces or occasionally through publicly subsidised spaces like regional galleries
- through retail outlets like art/craft shops
- through competitions, awards and prize exhibitions organised by others
- in running their own small business offering goods and services

In the early 1990s the government's short lived Cultural Industry Development Program (CIDP) managed by DCITA and the New Enterprise Incentive Scheme (NEIS) both provided really valuable small business training assistance to artists and craft practitioners trying to establish themselves professionally. This kind of intensive subsidised training is one of the most effective ways for governments to encourage economic self-sufficiency, particularly for craft practitioners. Despite the success of these programs, by 2000 there appeared to be very little of this specialised activity surviving.

Other government programs have attempted to develop business capabilities within the arts. The Big Picture Report on Federal Funding notes that in order to maximise self-sufficiency, the government has supported a range of export and industry programs and developed other streams of income through amendments to the Copyright Act.

Proposition 10 — Changes in Roles and Responsibilities

10.1 Funding is needed for extensive partnership based research between academic and arts industry bodies as the basis for informing arts infrastructure reforms and changes to arts funding body policies. This research needs to be supported both through the ARC and arts funding bodies.

10.2 Using this research, state gallery, art museum, university and regional gallery, CAOS, COA, ARI and private gallery bodies periodically need to undertake an assessment of whether their current priorities and modes of operation best meet the industry's need for flexibility, co-operation and diversity. This should be done through key organisational representatives holding open and representative round-table discussions and undertaking strategic analysis and planning to examine whether changes are needed to their focus and jurisdiction. Practitioners' views and experience should be central to this process.

10.3 The result of the round tables may mean that funding bodies will need to respond to these changes in the respective roles and responsibilities of different types of organisation by making their funding categories more flexible to recognise new clusters and cross-sector activity.

10.4 An important area of research which needs to be undertaken is the impact on the private sector of changes in the roles of auction houses and private galleries, the commercial operations of the public sector and the direct sales being made by artists themselves especially in capitalising on opportunities offered by new technology.

10.5 University arts schools and TAFEs offering visual arts and craft training need to undertake a detailed analysis of their current provisions with a view to clarifying sectoral responsibilities and investigating the possibility of greater co-operation and articulation.

Background

The Big Picture research confirmed that the recent evolution of arts infrastructure is a complex web of needs, opportunities, circumstances and resources available. One interesting finding of this study is the blurring of many boundaries between high and popular culture, public and private sector activities, roles of organizations and higher and vocational education.

While it is broadly recognised that the growing population of artists and community arts enthusiasts need to be served by a larger and more diverse set of representation, presentation and service bodies, in some cases, this blurring has caused problems as the roles and responsibilities of one sector are “encroached on” by another. This may be resulting in unnecessary confusion, competition and duplications of tasks and services.

This seems in part to stem from the increasing need for organisations to find more ways to generate income, and the desire to move “up the food chain” in terms of status and field of operation. With the increasing professionalisation of arts managers over the last few years, they are well qualified to undertake processes of reform themselves rather than having them imposed by the funding bodies.⁴³

The state galleries are now showing and collecting contemporary Australian work, many CAOs sector organisations are undertaking contemporary exhibition, publication and public education programs now often also mounted by state and national museums. In turn, some ARIs operate to all intents and purposes like CAOs or COA organisations.

The crossover between public and commercial sectors is even more complicated. In the competition for income, public sector organisations increasingly look for ways to augment their income including selling artists' work and taking a commission. Some commercial galleries are taking their cue from artist run initiatives and expect artists to cover costs which previously they took responsibility for, or to provide in-kind service like gallery supervision. Some commercial galleries manage secondary sales, auction houses are taking on first sales of work by contemporary artists, and some one-

⁴³ See B. French Big Picture research report *Contemporary Art Organisations, Artist-Run Initiatives* and S. Walker-Haseman, Big Picture research report *Individual Artists Interviews*

off exhibitions like awards and prizes are taking a commission at a level previously only demanded for full gallery representation services. Some public organisations have developed retail arms which can be seen to be in direct competition with the traditional commercial gallery market.⁴⁴

Other organisations, like Craft Australia, previously were funded to select and manage artists to exhibit at overseas venues. This was then taken over by the Audience and Market Development Division of the Australia Council, an example of the funding body competing with one of its clients as a service provider. There is an understandable reluctance by commercial operations to accept these sorts of activities as being the domain of the public sector and indeed are questioning whether the public sector has the knowledge and skills required.⁴⁵

One of the past “justifiers” as to why the public sector should be funded and able to sell work was a notion that the works being sold within the public sector were not the same types of works – publicly funded bodies can afford to take more risks in the work they show because they don’t have a sales imperative. This is probably still true in many cases. But it is possible to presume that the reason publicly funded outlets can have an impact on commercial sales figures, is because they are selling saleable work, and as their funding ratios contract, they may have to look more and more at selling work, skewing the balance both between what sort of work they exhibit and also the survival rates of commercial galleries.

Equitable trade practices are as relevant in the visual arts and craft industry as elsewhere; however the increased financial pressures have meant that many funded organisations (particularly in the craft sector) cannot remain viable. By the same token, the reliance on partial and under-resourced sales outlets, alongside more efficiently structured retail outlets is not competitive. This is an area needing further analysis and policy development to ensure the long-term mutual enrichment and viability of public and private enterprises. While the Myer funding does provide some assistance, it is not comprehensive enough in its scope to address this problem.

The Big Picture Commercial Gallery Report highlights the fact that at least 65% of Australian craftspeople do not have gallery representation. The public sector programs provide some services that a commercial gallery would for its stable of artists. These are usually delivered in an across the board, even ad hoc way, with a large part of the “business burden” still falling on the individual artist. This model does not provide anywhere near the degree of support for individual practice provided by a good relationship with a commercial gallery.

Rose Lang, executive officer of Australian Commercial Galleries Association (ACGA) believes the private sector would benefit from becoming more engaged with the public sector. She suggests that the ACGA be funded to encourage links between the

⁴⁴ See M. Kessler, Big Picture research reports and interviews, *Commercial Gallery Sector, Regional Galleries and Crafts Organisations*

⁴⁵ See *Report of the Contemporary Visual Arts and Craft Inquiry* p. 217

commercial galleries and the public sector, and to encourage the commercial galleries to take on forms of industrial regulation, arising out of recent work done on the Code of Practice, changes to copyright compliance etc.

Artists and their organizations and galleries need to discuss the delineation of roles and responsibilities between the sectors. It may be an outcome that the commercial gallery sector is given greater access to a range of government assistance programs like various tax incentive schemes which do not necessarily draw from arts budgets.

Other flexible funding mixes between private and public sectors could support ARI and freelance curator/writers' projects across sectors, for instance, University/ARI initiatives such as Artwrite at CoFA, ARI/CAOS collaborations, a combined website and weekly ARI e-broadsheets; use of University image databases and websites, etc.

Within the education and training area there is blurring between higher and vocational education, with some TAFEs introducing theory subjects and higher degrees (including PhDs). The universities are competing to attract high fee paying overseas students and increasing their postgraduate cohort. They are focussing increasingly on vocational, 'cultural industry' training, emphasising design, multimedia and communications courses at the expense of more traditional areas such as craft media. These areas of skills training are moving to the TAFE sector.

Proposition 11 - Support for Indigenous Arts and Crafts

11.1 The Big Picture believes that the Federal Government needs to undertake comprehensive research into and analysis of the needs of the Indigenous visual arts and craft sector. This research should expand appropriately on the Indigenous Art and Craft Centre Strategy and Action plan. It would need to take further, the issues touched on by the Myer Inquiry and respond to its recommendations including those for co-ordinated approaches by governments.

11.2 Of particular concern is the need for the Federal Government to provide appropriate Indigenous Communal Moral Rights legislation after consultation with and on the advice of informed Indigenous community representatives and arts industry experts.

11.3 The Federal Government also needs to act to protect Australian Indigenous cultural products from being endangered by copies and foreign imports.

11.4 To this end the Federal Government could facilitate the adoption of an appropriate and coherent method of authentication of Indigenous art and craft work.

11.5 Through an intensive, nation-wide education campaign, the Federal Government needs to take steps to ensure protection of Indigenous cultural rights, including protection of intellectual property against exploitation, and recognition of Indigenous protocols as the appropriate basis of ethical dealings.

11.6 The development of Indigenous-controlled training and employment opportunities would need to be prioritised through comprehensive research and co-ordinated support by all levels of government, education and museum sectors.

Background

The Australian Indigenous art market has grown exponentially and the artwork has become an international icon of Australian identity. However it is endangered by cheap foreign imitations, fakes and the transgression of Indigenous artists rights and community protocols. There is a continuing need for appropriate protection and respect to be given to ensure consultation and consent, authenticity, appropriate payment, protection of individual and communal copyright including moral rights and resale royalty payment, and prevention of unauthorised export of cultural heritage.

With the recent dissolution of ATSIC and the absorption of the functions of ATSIAB into DCITA, it will be important for there to be careful monitoring of support for Indigenous art and craft to ensure that it is not gradually phased out. The transfer of these responsibilities to the ATSIAB of the Australia Council would logically join them together with other like activities and provide a greater assurance of their continuance.

Indigenous Communal Moral Rights

At the time of writing, the arts sector was awaiting the Federal Government's reaction to the fields' responses to a Draft Exposure Bill for the introduction of Indigenous Communal Moral Rights as an amendment to the Moral Rights legislation. This legislation had been promised by the Federal Government at the time of the introduction of Moral Rights legislation in 2000 and again in 2003. The Bill proposes the use of a written or verbal agreement between the artist and the community who claim that their traditional knowledge is invested in the work, as being the means whereby communal moral rights are established. The arts sector is resisting this proposal on the grounds that it unfairly discriminates against Indigenous rights holders, by-passes existing established protocols and poses real practical difficulties. Issues like the duration of rights, what protection is available for rock art where the connection with community is not clear, retrospective rights, etc remain to be addressed. The whole issue of how to achieve collective rights sits very uncomfortably within the current copyright regime. Some experts are proposing completely new legislation to take account of a number of areas of Indigenous rights.

Indigenous Protocols

During the 1990s there has been an increasing interest in documenting and advocating the wide observance of Indigenous protocols in dealings between cultures. The key issues are

copyright, appropriation, faking, permission and respect, return of Indigenous material and human remains and heritage.

Several guide documents have been produced including:

- Terri Janke, *Our Culture, Our Future: Report on Australian Indigenous Cultural and Intellectual Property Rights*, IATSIS and ATSIC (1998)
- Doreen Mellor and Terri Janke, *Valuing Art, Respecting Culture: Protocols for Working with the Indigenous Australian Visual Arts and Craft Sector*, NAVA (2001)
- *Previous Possessions, New Obligations* Museums Australia, (1994) and
- *Taking the Time, museums, galleries, cultural protocols and communities* Museums Australia, (1998)
- *Indigenous Arts Protocol*, NSW Ministry for the Arts Indigenous Reference Group (1998)
- *Protocols for Producing Indigenous Australian Visual Arts and Craft*, one of five protocols booklets published by the Australia Council (2002)

Indigenous Arts and Craft Centre Funding

Prior to the federal and state/territory government funding increase resulting from the Myer Inquiry, the Big Picture Report on federal funding found that the only real growth since 1996 in direct Federal Government support for the production and presentation of visual arts and craft had been for Indigenous arts and craft through the Australia Council's Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Board (ATSIAB) and the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Commission and its Regional Art and Culture (RACS) program. For Indigenous artists, the funding increase resulting from the Myer Inquiry has been focussed through the federal Art and Craft Centre Policy and Action Plan. Community Development Employment Programs (CDEP) also are a common, though an often-criticised form of income for Indigenous artists. It is also noted that not all Indigenous funding is specifically arts-directed. Kessler's Big Picture Report echoes Hetti Perkins' submission to the Myer Report in observing that more often than not, art practices within many Indigenous cultures are intimately connected to wider community development, heritage, education and employment issues.⁴⁶

Indigenous arts and craft infrastructure in rural and remote areas is by and large less developed than that serving non-Indigenous artists and craftspeople. While some Indigenous visual and craft artists have earned substantial reputations, and are very well served by mainstream public galleries, the dominant metropolitan exhibition and collection structures ensure that a relatively small group of Indigenous 'name' artists are consistently promoted. However, a number of commercial galleries, agents, art/craft centres and auction houses have been assiduously promoting and selling Indigenous art and craft and the international market for this work has expanded hugely in the last ten years.

The Big Picture report on Indigenous Arts observes that from 1995, ATSIC funding was devolved from a national program to regional councils. This resulted in the withdrawal of

⁴⁶ See *Report of the Contemporary Visual Arts and Craft Inquiry* p.198-201

operational funding from Desart, and the reduction of funding to art and craft centres. Business and strategic planning became an ATSIC priority. In this context, 'best practice' private businesses such as Papunya Tula Artists Co-operative are models for important and successful Indigenous-controlled enterprises.

Subsequent research and submissions to the Myer Inquiry argued the need for the on-going subsidy of all art centres, given the low income of artists and fluctuations in the art market.⁴⁷ The Myer Report reiterated 1997 evidence that ATSIC investment in the art centres was money well spent, generating income for the community at a rate of \$3 for every ATSIC \$1, of which \$1.50 was returned to artists.

Proposition 12 — Private Sector

12.1 It would be advantageous for the industry as a whole if the Federal Government investigated and introduced further incentives to boost private sector philanthropy and sponsorship support including the introduction of tax concessions as recommended by the Myer Inquiry report

Background

The Australian Non-profit Data project showed that in 1997, of all philanthropic donations made, \$246 million went to sport and recreation representing 8.9% of the total, 16.4% went to education and research, 17.2% went for community and welfare purposes, and \$17 million was for the arts and culture representing a tiny 0.6% of the total.⁴⁸

It is understood that philanthropy, arts included, is not a strong characteristic of Australian society. This is felt by some to result from government taking a deal of responsibility, including providing subsidy for the arts, particularly since the mid-seventies (though this has varied greatly from time to time). The comparisons need a more detailed analysis and elaboration since they are so different from country to country. However, in this regard the comparison is most often made with the US, where philanthropy of all kinds, the arts included, is well developed (though recently decreasing). At the very least, Australia's establishment as a "new world" nation under very different historical circumstances needs to be understood as contributing to this difference.

Despite the attitudinal disparity between Australia and the USA, efforts continue to expand the non-government contribution through both sponsorship and philanthropy. There is increasing government rhetorical and at times practical commitment and the sector itself tries very hard to secure an increase in this form of support. However, there is always the suspicion that governments will use any private sector increase as an excuse

⁴⁷ C. Mercer, Creative Country: Review of ATSIC Arts and Crafts Industry Support Strategy (ACISS), Culture Section, Culture, legal and Family Policy Branch, ATSIC, Canberra, 1997, cited Myer p.199)

⁴⁸ See M. Kessler, Big Picture research reports and interviews, *Private Sponsorship and Philanthropy*

to diminish their own contribution. Various forms of incentive have been proposed to governments over the years and in particular, it is argued that tax deductibility is more "treasury efficient" than straight grants because the government's income foregone is matched manyfold by the contribution of donors.

Currently the government regulations pertaining to sponsorship and philanthropy are:

i) Register of Cultural Organisations

Organisations listed with the Register can offer income tax exemption to benefactor for cash donations. This was established in 1991.

ii) Private Foundations

In 1999, the law changed to allow businesses, families and individuals to have greater freedom to set up private foundations for philanthropic purposes. The difference now is that they are not obliged to seek public donations for a tax deduction to apply. However, the main condition is that the funds can only make distributions to deductible gift recipients. This therefore excludes gifts directly to individual artists.

iii) Cultural Gifts Program

Benefaction in gifts of work to public institutions attracts 100% tax concessions on the market value of the artwork and was brought in in 1978. In 1999, these gifts were made exempt from capital gains tax and donors could apportion the tax deductions for the gift over five years. For the creators of the works however, there is a complexity in that the work has to be shown not to be part of their "trading stock for at least a year" for them to be able to secure the same concession.

This program seems to have had a big impact in a rise in the value of gifts from \$17 million in 1999/2000 to \$27 million in 2000/2001. The Big Picture found that art galleries are the largest beneficiaries in terms of total value, receiving 71% of the donations as well as the greatest number, 47%.⁴⁹ Under this provision, public galleries can be set up with private financing, for example, in 2002 using the Cultural Gifts Program, the Beson family gave its art collection to a public gallery which it had established itself.

iv) Cultural Bequests Program

Established in 1998, the program allows bequests to be made on the same conditions as the Cultural Gifts Program, allowing an income tax deduction for donations of assets with a market value of over \$5,000. However, it is competitive, allowing gifts to be negotiated only up to a \$5 million total per annum that can be accepted by galleries. The Big Picture also notes the benefits to galleries and museums from this program.⁵⁰

v) The Australia Business Arts Foundation (AbaF)'s Australia Cultural Fund provides opportunities for individuals, businesses and foundations to make tax-deductible

⁴⁹ Penhallurick, L. *Tax concessions to facilitate philanthropy*, in Tax matters for the visual arts Seminar Papers, Arts Law Centre of Australia, May 1998.

⁵⁰ Ibid

donations to individual artists and organisations which do not have deductible gift recipient status. For more details see under Proposition 13 below.

In the mid 90s there was a great deal of effort put into persuading the government to increase its tax incentives to encourage private sector giving. Continuing and expanding the scope of this effort, the Myer Inquiry recommended several new incentives:

- amending the Cultural Gifts Program to permit donors to claim 125% deductions for gifts of new works by contemporary Australian artists to public collecting institutions for a trial period of five years;
- establishing a donations program directed at research and development activities attracting a 125% tax deduction for the first five years;
- establishing a program where foundations are encouraged to make donations to the Australia Council or another appropriate public fund; (To some extent this is being achieved through the establishment of ArtSupport).
- amending the Cultural Gifts program to enable individual artists to claim a market value deduction for gifts of their own work, whether these be from their "trading stock" or personal collection;
- amending the philanthropy provisions to clearly state that an advantage or benefit received by donors does not prevent their ability to receive a tax deduction provided the benefit does not exceed a specified limit;
- establishing an acquisitions fund to provide grants to collecting institutions matching private donations used for the acquisition of works of contemporary visual arts and craft. (In its 2003 election policy, the Victorian government promised \$5million to be matched from private sources for the establishment of a contemporary art acquisitions program for the National Gallery of Victoria in response to the Myer report).

These changes would address what are seen as current shortfalls or anomalies and expand the scope of interest amongst philanthropists and collectors and artists themselves.

However, thus far the government has not shown interest in implementing these propositions.

Proposition 13 — Australia Business Arts Foundation (AbaF)

13.1 The Big Picture believes that a detailed study should be undertaken by DCITA of the value of the outcomes of the work of the Australian Business Arts Foundation, to aid future policy development.

13.2 While it seems that the work of AbaF is delivering useful outcomes for some major organisations particularly in the performing arts sector, for small to medium visual arts and craft organisations and living visual artists and craft practitioners the benefits have been minor. The Big Picture believes that the AbaF should take up this challenge and focus its efforts more towards finding and implementing effective strategies to address the needs of these sectors directly.

Background

Established in 1994 as the Australian Foundation for Culture and the Humanities, this government-funded agency was intended to bring the arts and humanities closer together and generate imaginative programs of national interest. However, its focus was changed towards arts sponsorship (reflected in the name change to Australia Business Arts Foundation). The benefits of the sponsorship partnerships generated by the ABaF have primarily gone to the large organisations and mostly in the performing arts. Others in the arts sector feel that these organizations are already well equipped and skilled in attracting this kind of support.

Karen Meehan's Valuing the Contribution of AbaF, (artshub.com) stated that the AbaF receives an annual subsidy of \$1.6m and if the funds received since 1996 were added together, as of 2002, the entity operating as the AbaF had received subsidy from the Commonwealth government of approx \$9.4 million. It perhaps is timely to assess whether this represents value for money. AbaF claimed that in 2001-2002 it had played a role in the development of three partnerships in the visual arts and crafts sector. This seems to be a fall in the success-rate for the visual arts and craft, for in 1999-2002, 24 of 92 partnerships were assisted in this sector (ie 26%). In 1999/2000, total business sponsorship across all sectors was \$75 million.⁵¹

The Myer Inquiry Report indicates that from 1986 to 1996, the level of arts as a proportion of all sponsorship fell from 13% to 5%⁵². Myer comments that contemporary visual arts and crafts are minor beneficiaries of donations and sponsorships of this kind. In a 2002 press release, the AbaF says that, by 99/2000, \$43.5 million was going to the arts in donations and bequests. \$34 million of this money benefited the museum sector.⁵³

The Big Picture argues the need for governments to more clearly differentiate what sorts of sponsorships and benefits may be achievable for a diversity of organisations and businesses. The AbaF and like organizations do recognise that many organisations, artists, and projects will never be "partnership-ready". With the trend to longer-term partnerships, it is the larger organisations and projects; ie. those able to resource the sponsorship and those with a demonstrable 12-18 month-plus predictable lifetime, who will most benefit from these brokerage schemes. These are more commonly heritage projects than contemporary art.⁵⁴

In 2003 the Australia Council formed the ArtSupport program in partnership with the Australia Business Arts Foundation, to undertake a joint program of activities to boost

⁵¹ Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) figures showed that the arts received \$118.5m from various non-government sources in 1999-2000. \$75m was from business sponsorship in cash and in kind. Philanthropic donations and bequests totalled \$43.5m.

⁵² See *Report of the Contemporary Visual Arts and Craft Inquiry* quoting from Australia Council (1996) *Corporate Support for the Arts* p.6

⁵³ AbaF 2002 press release included these figures quoted as having been drawn from ABS statistics

⁵⁴ M. Kessler Big Picture research reports and interviews, *Private Sponsorship and Philanthropy*

arts philanthropy. Two staff are located in the offices of each institution. Recognising an area of particular need, the focus was on finding ways to stimulate support for the small to medium organisations which traditionally have found attracting private sector support very challenging. Through this initiative, AbaF established two business volunteer programs: adviceBank begun in 2002, and boardBank in 2004. By 2005, 156 adviceBank projects were completed (with another 37 adviceBank projects in progress) and there were 40 confirmed board placements through boardBank. At that time, the total value of professional services provided in-kind through both adviceBank and boardBank was estimated to be around \$1,200,000.

However, some in the arts sector have expressed concern that the attention of ArtSupport has shifted to seeking sponsorship for activities initiated by the Australia Council and AbaF themselves, thus diverting this support away from being directed to arts organisations and artists.

The work of AbaF is understood to be a long-term strategy to build an environment of private sector consciousness and commitment. While sponsorship is difficult for individual artists to attract because they are usually operating as sole traders, and given that the arts as a whole gets so little money comparatively, it is important that artists are also helped to get these benefits.

By creating a scheme in which artists can come under the umbrella of the Australia Cultural Fund (ACF) in 2003, the AbaF found a valuable mechanism to ensure that living artists are able to benefit from philanthropic gifts. This ensures that it is not simply heritage or museum arts that attract private sector support. The ACF recorded its first donation in 1999, from AbaF's then chair, Richard Pratt. However, the ACF was promoted and resourced with staff only from 2003, when regular donations to the Fund commenced. By mid-2005, \$730,458 from 186 donations in total had been made to the ACF. All these funds are granted to recipients without fee or commission. While this measure is applauded, attracting this sort of support still requires a high degree of entrepreneurship and continuing commitment by AbaF.

Proposition 14 — Regional Arts and Craft

14.1 The Big Picture believes that regional creative arts activity needs to be given much greater attention.

14.2 One important way to stimulate and give practical focus to this activity, is for all levels of government to increase funding to establish new regional arts and craft 'hubs', and better support existing ones to achieve links to and co-operation with other public and private sector institutions and enterprises.

14.3 Regionally based key craft centres could be encouraged to tender for international project funding, where their existing infrastructure, studios,

galleries and IT resources make them appropriate hosts for international region-to-region exchanges.

14.4 Universities need to work more closely with DFAT, the Australia Council, Asialink and other industry partners in promoting regional exhibitions, scholarship, artists' residencies and studios.

Background

The lack of ARIs, CAOs and commercial galleries in regional areas often means that ideas of 'community benefit' and 'professional development' may be different from those conceived in the major cities. They are often conceived in more open-ended terms of collective action or participation, access to master-classes and workshops, co-ops, shared studio spaces, and increased dialogue with local business. There may be more emphasis on open-ended research, communication and production rather than on standardised exhibition outcomes.⁵⁵

Voting strength is likely to be one compelling reason that regional development has become of increasing interest to governments. Federal Government funding to the regions was increased in 1996 and has continued to increase since. Based on the success of this support, the Big Picture suggests the need for further direct investment in regional initiatives. Many of the existing entities have matured over many years (for example, *Textile* magazine, the Sturt Workshops at Mittagong, the media focus of Noosa, Wagga and Tamworth regional galleries, or the impact of Hermannsburg and Tiwi ceramics). Most of these bodies have an integrated local, national and international perspective.

To reach their full potential these devolved centres of excellence require more professional development grants, fellowships and internship/masterclass residencies. They are the natural 'ports' for region-to-region international exchange. For instance, existing long-term specialist links between Wollongong University and the Gobelin tapestry workshops benefit from direct partnerships between university and arts funding bodies. Such partnerships do not need to be brokered through extra layers of state arts/craft administration. The success of these centres of excellence in production, masterclass-level education and exhibition/distribution, provides alternative models to those of state craft centres. It would be valuable to strengthen existing 'guild' or workshop production centres or exhibition venues that have earned a strong reputation for excellence amongst practitioners and built audiences over the years. Equally, new centres need to be established where there is need, opportunity and energy.

The regional arts infrastructure is well suited for international exchanges. The old Australia and Regions Artists Exchange (ARX) model provides an historical precedent for regional-international dialogues based on a historical, geographical or cultural logic. Regional centres provide links with tourist and community infrastructural investments. These internal dynamics are especially important with Indigenous communities – for example the success of the community-based Wilcannia print-makers. Theo Tremblay's

⁵⁵ M. Kessler, Big Picture research report and interviews, *Regional Galleries*

'outreach' printmaking partnership, run through the Canberra Art School is another successful model. Ipswich Regional Gallery (Global Art Link) also pioneered this model of international region-to-region connection in the late 1990s. Key crafts-based centres can also be readily identified (such as Tamworth, Mittagong or Wagga) where existing infrastructure, studios, galleries, IT resources make them ideal hosts for region-to-region international exchanges. These centres of excellence should be encouraged to tender for longer-term and mixed source funding as could some existing international residencies.

Proposition 15 – Government Support for Overseas Projects

15.1 DFAT needs to establish international programs to provide greater support for visual artists and craft practitioners to attend Biennales, art fairs, and international exhibitions in which they are represented, and to support their collaborative work with international peers. This would allow practitioners directly to represent themselves and make international connections.

15.2 To increase the profile of Australian visual artists and craft practitioners internationally, the Federal Government needs to provide additional support for galleries and agents in a revised and expanded visual arts and craft export strategy.

15.3 The inter-twined roles of the public and commercial sectors needs to be better recognised in evaluating and planning more flexible funding models for initiatives overseas.

15.4 Funding bodies need to be strategic about the countries targeted as export markets, by working directly with artists and their galleries, who have the information and flexibility to know where to 'place' work to best effect.

15.5 It would be valuable if the Australia Council would research percentages of funding going to ARI, CAOs and COA-hosted international projects and compare the efficacy of these programs with other types of international activities such as fairs, Biennales and touring exhibitions, to decide where best to prioritise international exhibition funding.

15.6 The Federal Government needs to appoint more cultural officers attached to Australian embassies and consulates to facilitate international exposure of Australian art and craft, and opportunities for practitioners to achieve direct representation.

15.7 It would be valuable for DFAT to establish an information database and website about visual arts and craft sector international programs, and visitors to and from Australia. This needs to be supported by a facilitation program to maximise the value of these visits, perhaps as part of the role of the

International Cultural Council. In this regard it would be valuable for better co-ordination to be achieved through the Australia Council forging closer links with DFAT and other government sectors so that these agencies can provide each other and the visual arts sector with this kind of information.

Background:

Over the decade to 2001, the amount expended on international projects by the Australia Council increased by 20%.

The Big Picture working research paper on the Australia Council by Travers⁵⁶ indicated that international grants were for three main activities:

- grants to individuals for use of international studios or other overseas travel
- special events, especially the Venice Biennale
- export programs

Support for Individual Artists: export programs

Sustained export programs began in 1991, with the VACB joining with Asialink to tour artists and exhibitions to Asia. The VACB continues to devolve funds to Asialink for artist residencies and activities.

In interview, many artists and craftspeople applauded the Australia Council increases in individual grants for overseas projects, including overseas residencies. They argued that international networks are best built from the ground up, ie through practitioner-directed initiatives. ARI, CAOs, COA, regional gallery and university networks could be strengthened to support individual artist and artworker exchanges. In particular, these institutions are well placed to provide artists and artworkers with access to electronic international communication.

Exchanges, Residencies and Fellowships

The Australia Council has increased the amount of its support for overseas residencies. By the end of the 1980s, the VACB decided to add to this a focus on Asia. It was a policy direction largely driven by the actions of artists themselves, and organisations such as the Australia and Regions Artists Exchange (ARX) in Western Australia, who were arranging exchanges with near neighbouring countries.

In 1991-92 the VACB decided to expand the number of overseas studios with a target of 16 by the year 2000. Over the decade the Board increased by about 75% the amount of grants to artists for overseas residencies or travel. The cost of this program increased by 37% (indexed). The Big Picture believes that it is now time for regional exchanges to be better developed.

The private sector and University-based trusts offering travelling scholarships also are getting Australian artists into a great variety of overseas contexts - studios, residencies, educational institutions, work with mentors, for example the Samstag Scholarship, the

⁵⁶ Travers M, Big Picture report, *Australia Council*

Helen Lempriere and Freedman Foundation Travelling Scholarships, and the Power Institute (University of Sydney) Cité studio in Paris.

In many of these targeted international contexts, art and crafts practitioners control the exchange, and in the best cases, democratise the dialogue between cultures. The same can be said for many independent curatorial or writing/publishing practices. A recent successful example was the 2003 Goulburn Gallery-hosted, artist-run international artists' camp at Burrawang valley (via Mittagong) involving 21 international artists.

Artists interviewed for this research preferred these alternative models of education and dialogue, noting the value of internet collaborations, master-classes, residencies and workshops as a critical counterweight to the expensive Australian pavilion at Venice or the international art fairs. Often the micro and the macro intersect: positive models include the Utopia Bartik-Brahma Tirta Sari Studio (Jakarta) workshop collaboration (APT, 1999).

The Australia Council funds a limited number of artist-artist international exchange projects through the CAOs and COA sectors. An analysis of the efficacy of outcomes from this investment of government support compared with that for other types of international projects such as fairs, Biennales and touring exhibitions should be used to inform future decisions about what to prioritise.

Big Picture research indicates increasing CAOs and COA activity in the area of presenting international contemporary art to Australian audiences.⁵⁷ It would be valuable to ascertain whether these visits are aligned with residencies, larger special events, such as Biennales, or whether they cluster around other partnerships, such as the university sector, museum sector, major conferences, or events hosted through the larger private galleries. This is another important area for future Australia Council research and industry discussion.

Further research needs to be done to include the same information about COA international projects. In the past, this was a cause of contention between Craft Australia and COA, with Craft Australia maintaining a presence at the big art/craft fairs and COA making "more lateral" links. With the restructuring of Craft Australia, it no longer takes the responsibility for development of international representation. This is now overseen by the Australia Council.

International Survey Shows and Fairs

The Big Picture interviews revealed a perceived 'globalisation of style' regulated in part through the expanding international survey circuit. Any assertion of the homogenisation of exhibition practice raises the issue of limited international curatorial voices. Australian curators need to gain greater international curatorial expertise in order to develop a more diversified and critical international presence. Big Picture interviewees observed a dearth of first-rate curatorial training courses, and also that people working as curators are often

⁵⁷ See B. French, Big Picture research reports and interviews, *Contemporary Arts Organisations*

under pressure to undertake administration, while arts administrators are under pressure to curate. These distinct jobs require specialised training.

Universities provide many training opportunities for writers and curators. An increase in writing and curatorial project grants and fellowships would facilitate international internships and artist-writer partnerships. Internationally recognised curatorial courses such as Grenoble and the NY Whitney Independent Studio program are all attached to galleries and attract top-level theorists and artist-theorists as guest-lecturers in hands-on operations. This area may also benefit from more flexible mentoring and internship programs.

International Surveys

Special events such as Biennales account for a large percentage of Australia Council funding, however they remain under increasing economic pressure. The lack of support from Australia leaves a significant proportion to be raised each time from foreign governments and corporate sponsors. Partnerships may be developed through capitalising on the indirect economic benefits Biennales offer state and private collections.

Stepping back a little, the question arises: do Australian visual arts and craft practitioners and their audiences want the Biennale of Sydney to become a 'competitive', medium-sized international biennale within set Euro-US criteria? Thirty years since its emergence from the Transfield Prize, the Biennale still struggles to finance what has become a major event in the cultural life of the city. However, it is now ringed by equally imaginative and critically focused international curatorial models. People used to travel from interstate to be involved in dialogue, and the Biennale of Sydney was one of the few outlets for such discussion. Today, however, there are far more voices and more outlets for discussion. The Big Picture notes the increasing regional reach of recent Adelaide festivals, Tasmania's '10 Days on the Island' and the Brisbane Asia-Pacific Triennial. These events indicate a sharper focus for festivals and surveys, where regional access is a major issue, not only for new and broader audiences but also for artists.⁵⁸ The plethora of regional and themed festivals also showcases new ways of using technology to maximise accessibility and to broaden the reach and scope of events.

The Venice Pavilion

There has been much questioning of the large amount of direct federal funding spent on the Australian pavilion at the Venice Biennale. In critical terms, the national pavilion model (the Venice 'flagship') has come under increasing international pressure to re-think its role and curatorial form.

A related question is whether there is any critical difference between the Australian pavilion at the Venice Biennale and representation at the art fairs. In cultural trade dollar terms, more artists and galleries get more benefit from the latter events. Increasingly, the Venice Biennale is being viewed internationally as too big and unwieldy to represent a critical survey of contemporary international art. Australia arguably benefits more from

⁵⁸ Realtime article on the 'Next Wave Festival', cited in The Big Picture *Festivals Report*

its pavilion at Venice during the architectural biennale, which is held on alternate years to the art biennale.

Competition Between Public and Private Sectors

Some Big Picture interviewees felt that the public sector is less skilled in the area of international cultural trade than the commercial sector, which is unnecessarily penalised in the scramble for mixed sources of funding. Commercial galleries have clearly led the way and borne most of the costs of promoting their artists' international reputations and developing export markets. The commercial sector would welcome governmental assistance to document, archive and disseminate information about contemporary artists. At the very least, public institutions could better share their information (for example, Asialink sharing contacts and assisting artists to access the information they need when they go overseas either independently or as part of a residency.)⁵⁹

Artists (and/or their gallery representatives) should be helped to attend international art and craft fairs and exhibitions and to ensure adequate follow-up, which suggests limited governmental travel budgets should prioritise trips by practitioners rather than administrators.

Given the paucity of resources, the question arises whether Australia could be more strategic about the countries it targets as export markets. Big Picture believes that a valuable way forward is to work directly with artists and their galleries, as they have the information and flexibility to know where to 'place' work: for instance, Sarah Cottier (to 2003) at Basel, Roslyn Oxley at Cologne, Stephen Mori at Chicago, Gitte Weiss at New York, Sherman Galleries in Japan, Greenaway in Madrid. The Big Picture hopes the Australia Council will have developed responses to these and related issues in its study of the efficacy of the Visual Arts and Craft Export Strategy.

Indigenous artists overseas

Like other artists, Indigenous artists use overseas travel to broaden networks, be inspired, see what other artists are doing, undertake professional development, etc., and undertake overseas residencies. The Big Picture Indigenous Art Report stresses the value of Indigenous artists' attendance at international survey exhibition, art fairs and expos, either in person or through their nominated art dealer or curator. A number of art centres have also been represented by dealers at the Australian Contemporary Art Fairs. Maruku, which has attended a number of trade fairs and expos, is one of the biggest art centres in terms of its turnover and customer base. An interesting development is that some Indigenous communities are contracting the fabrication of their designs to international manufacturers.

Proposition 16 — Cultural Trade

⁵⁹ See M. Kessler, two Big Picture research reports and interviews, *Commercial Gallery Sector, Major Events and Festivals*

16.1 Peak industry organisations, arts ministries and statutory bodies need to monitor the effects of the Australian US Free Trade Agreement in order to have the evidence to negotiate any required changes at a later date.

Background

Over the years of debate about identity politics, it has been increasingly recognised that the cultural expression of a country is valued by its citizens and needs protection both against the imperial ambitions of other nations and equally to protect the expression of cultural diversity within the country.

One emerging issue with long-term potential effects on Australia's cultural industries is the Free Trade Agreement with the US. The threat of this agreement is to "lock down" or freeze the local content rules into the provisions that the sector currently enjoys, without making concessions with regard to future technological developments, such as new markets that open up as a result of the creation of new platforms for the delivery of digital content. These new developments run the risk of being unprotected by the local content rules, and thus of the sector being overwhelmed by sheer mass of US content and the unrivalled economic clout of the American entertainment industries. The US argued for a "standstill" position in relation to emergent technologies and the arts sector is concerned that it has effectively persuaded the Australian Government to trade these concessions against other "rights".⁶⁰

Proposition 17 — Cultural Tourism

17.1 All levels of government and business need to better support creative, engaging and diversified cultural tourist encounters and commodities which are regulated by travel and arts industry codes of ethics.

Background

From a straightforward industrial perspective, 'globalised' cultural tourism has opened up employment opportunities for visual artists and craftspeople, particularly for Indigenous artists. These opportunities peaked around the 2000 Olympics, while post- September 11 and SARS, tourist markets levelled off dramatically. In the long-term, however, cultural tourism will no doubt be a growing area of employment opportunity for art and crafts practitioners.

The issues go beyond simple points about employment opportunities, however. The rapidity of cultural globalisation has meant that the value of vernacular voices is often determined within a context of cultural stereotyping. Labels of authenticity and other provenancing mechanisms are important for consumers to help distinguish genuinely Indigenous art and craft works from imported overseas imitations.⁶¹

⁶⁰ For discussion of the issues, see http://www.visualarts.net.au/av/articles/free_trade.pdf

⁶¹ This issue is further discussed in M.Kessler, Big Picture research report and interviews, *Indigenous Arts*

As cultural commodities, arts and crafts benefit regional tourism by ‘value-adding’ to the experience, hence the value of government tourism and small business assistance in supporting art and craft co-operative workshops, galleries and/or shops. More productive use can be made of regional gallery infrastructure, along with that of community museums and schools, for instance, in supporting studio or writing residencies, commissions, symposia or publications linked to commemorative or significant regional events.

It is also increasingly the case that visual artists and craftspeople are being commissioned to provide their expertise in the process of heritage interpretation, where they offer a variety of services including contributions to urban and landscape design, graphic design and illustration, display mechanisms, film and video and other imaginative forms of representation of historical information and ideas. The artistic cross-fertilisation of contemporary-heritage practices is exciting and deserving of increased federal, state and local government support. It is, however, difficult to ‘fit’ such projects within existing funding frameworks.

Proposition 18 – Technology Banks

18.1 **Though the recommendation to establish an IT Bank made in the report of the Myer Inquiry has not been taken up, the Big Picture would strongly encourage the Australia Council to take responsibility for further exploring the intention of this proposal and finding a workable solution.**

18.2 **This could be done by liaising with industry and the three levels of government to create brokering arrangements for the purchase and lease of high-end equipment for use by artists and organisations. Pro-bono arrangements with manufacturers and suppliers of equipment also could be investigated. Regional access, or the establishment of regional branches, would be an important factor.**

Background

A very interesting suggestion by the Myer Report is contained in Recommendation 11: the establishment of a technology loan facility, to be used by public galleries and art/craft organisations, through matched funding by Commonwealth, State and Territory Governments.⁶² This would help to alleviate the high cost of technology that many artworks require for their production and/or presentation. While the present government has not pursued this initiative, it is nonetheless one that the Big Picture believes should be explored more fully.

Big Picture research showed that new media work stretches the CAOs sector’s resources to its limits, and is supported by specialist venues, relevant university galleries and the

⁶² Report of the Contemporary Visual Arts and Craft Inquiry, DCITA, 2002, pp 222-226

state and national museum sectors. How this work can be shown around regional Australia remains a vexed question, for many regional galleries have not been built to show new media work, and lack technological facilities, training capacity and technological expertise.

Commercial galleries are in the process of embracing new technologies in order to promote their galleries and the artists they represent, though like other infrastructural organisations, they are pinched between wanting and being pressured to embrace digital systems and the costs of maintaining and developing them.⁶³

Regional galleries report an across-the-board dearth of equipment to show new media, although some galleries are doubtful about the interest level of their primary audience. However, this comment should be seen in the context of poor regional training opportunities to maintain, develop and use these resources imaginatively. It is therefore worth reiterating the emphasis that the 1996 Artworkers' Union's *Artworkers and Public Galleries Charter* placed upon accessing new technology in the regions:

“10.9 Electronic Media Access

Electronic media access is a vital resource for regional artworkers. Until galleries gain this facility, a partnership with the local library could supply artists with access. Information technology provides low cost, high volume electronic storage; individual access to global communication networks; lower cost handling, storage and manipulation of images, text, graphics and sound. These developments are leading to new forms of publishing, including on-line collaborative networks, electronic journals (virtual gallery sites, e-zines, art data bases etc), multi-media compilations, short-run desktop publications and customised books. A policy on computer access services for artworkers (service costs and equipment are beyond the means of those working outside institutions) is essential for regional art communities.“ (p.15)

Proposition 19 – Digital Research Centre

19.1 The Big Picture believes that Australia needs a state-of-the-art centre for research into the digital image. (The Banff Centre in Canada might provide a model).

19.2 Arts organisations, such as ANAT, the Australia Council and NAVA could look into the feasibility of such a centre, exploring sponsorships and funding avenues. The Centre could provide training workshops, residencies and local and international conferences. The example of COFA, where artists work closely with computer scientists, also needs to be studied closely for comparison.

⁶³ See M. Kessler, Big Picture research report and interviews, *Commercial Gallery Sector*

Background

Labor government Initiatives

The Labor government's 1994 *Creative Nation* policy launched a number of projects specifically addressing new technology:

- Australian Multi-Media Enterprises, a one year \$45 million injection of funds to accelerate the development and commercialisation of multimedia products and services for regional and global consumption.
- Funding for forums to bring together individuals, agencies and enterprises from the cultural and multimedia industries (around one half million dollars per year, though it is unclear how long this program ran for).
- Cooperative Multimedia Development Centres for tertiary institutions and industry groups to work together on research, development and marketing of multimedia product. (\$22 million over four years)
- Australia on CD program a \$7 million program to produce a series of CD-ROM titles displaying a range of Australian culture, arts and heritage subjects.
- Film industry participation in new media. A package of measures aiming to stimulate new media projects in the film industry and training needs in the audiovisual sector.

The results of these initiatives have been mixed and few of these initiatives resulted in long-term viable enterprises or infrastructures.

The Coalition Government Initiatives

The Howard Government has, in various ways, continued to support technological change through various arms of the bureaucracy, including DCITA (Department of Communications, Information Technology and the Arts), NOIE (National Organisation for the Information Economy), the Australia Council (through the New Media Arts Board), etc. Some of these initiatives include the ill-fated One Stop Shop website and investment through Australia's Cultural Network in arts industry developed gateway and portal websites (for example, NAVA's Visual Arts Net) and professional development events like the OZeCulture conferences.

Australia Council and New Media

The New Media Arts Board (NMAB) was the most recently established board of the Australia Council, formed in the mid 1990s to support artists using new media and working across more than one artform/medium, often in collaboration. The grants distributed in 2000 were \$2.7 million, in 2002, \$2.6 million and in 2003, \$2.55 million. This indicates a downward trend in the NMAB funding since 2000 (down \$150k in unadjusted terms). The Big Picture research found that the NMAB had the same funding categories as the other Boards, though it expressed concern for the development of curators of new media arts. The then chair of the Board, Michael Snelling suggested that one impact of the Board's work had been to establish or encourage the establishment of partnerships with science and other organisations which would most likely not have happened otherwise and which

extended the range of working possibilities for artists (and communities through outcomes).⁶⁴

The Board was particularly keen to see developments in new media undertaken in collaboration with industry groups and/or other government areas, signalling a desire to spread the cost burden of the artforms using new media and technology to other backers and sponsors. In 2004, the Australia Council and the Australian Research Council formed a partnership whereby over a three year period the broad plan was to work towards a centre of excellence for art and science. With the proposed changes to the way the Council deals with new media and hybrid arts, everything is now likely to change.

The Myer Report

Recommendation 6, (6.3.1) of the Myer Report suggests that a limited number of contemporary arts organisations be allocated funding to take a leadership role in, among other things, "developments in art and technology including sound, performance, and other 'hybrid' forms of visual arts practice."⁶⁵ The report notes that almost all of the submissions from contemporary arts organisations pointed out the difficulties in working with and affording the new technologies.

New Technology and Arts Infrastructure

The Australian Network for Art and Technology (ANAT) is Australia's peak network and advocacy body for artists working with science and technology. It is involved in collaborative research (with ARC funding) and through workshops, conferences, forums and newsletters, supports artists of all types working with the range of new technology.⁶⁶

Big Picture research shows that outside of ANAT, the CAOs approach to new technology is on a case-by-case basis. Thus, CAOs member organisations are pressured to resource specialist areas, yet also meet all the expectations of all the forms of activity that come within the rubric of contemporary visual arts practices (including publishing, education etc). But they are funded for neither adequately and they have no clear indication from funding bodies or within a national cross-sector infrastructural network as to what specific role they may best focus on.

The relationship of CAOs sector organisations to developments in art and technology is a clear case in point. Some, Artspace in particular and the ACP (Australian Centre for Photography) to a degree, also have involved themselves wholeheartedly in developments in this area. Yet they are simply not adequately resourced to do this, in terms of staff expertise, available hardware, configuration of spaces etc. This is not just in the overtly digital sphere. None of these organisations are particularly well equipped to present digital video projection, which is rapidly becoming the core medium of the moment. In fact, not even the

⁶⁴ drawn from B. French, *Big Picture Roundtable Interviews* unpublished

⁶⁵ See *Report of the Contemporary Visual Arts and Craft Inquiry*, DCITA 2002, p.187

⁶⁶ see <http://www.anat.org.au/>

spaces in the new IMA (Institute of Modern Art, Brisbane) or ACCA (Australian Centre for Contemporary Art, Melbourne) have had such capacities specifically built into them. The only organisation to be able to embrace this role fully is the Australian Centre for the Moving Image. However, with the increase in funding resulting from the Myer Inquiry, some organisations may be in a slightly better position to make some inroads here.

Creative Industries

Developed first in the US and the UK, the idea of 'creative industries' has been around for a few years. It refers to the sector of the economy producing services or objects with an artistic or creative content. Thus, included are such industries as advertising, design, fashion, film, music and photography as well as the visual arts and crafts. Given the digital developments in many of these industries, the idea has become synonymous with the use of digital processes. In Australia, 'creative industries' has a twin focus:

i) it is a research initiative, established in 2001 by a collaboration between DCITA and NOIE to "develop a comprehensive Digital Content Strategy, with the objective of accelerating the production, distribution and marketing of digital content and applications domestically and internationally and was restated in the 2001 election policy of the Federal Government. The commitment arose from the recognition that digital content and applications will become increasingly important, both in economic terms and as a means of expressing Australia's unique cultural identity."⁶⁷

ii) Creative Industries is also the name of a new faculty at the Queensland University of Technology that is attempting to fashion itself into a cyber faculty that brings together training and research in cultural industries. Its brief is to reformulate the goals of creative arts in line with the 'new economy': "We differ from traditional arts and humanities faculties because we are focused on turning the creative arts towards the new economy and business applications. Our aim is to produce graduates who are as interested in wealth-creation as they are in content-creation. To this end, we recognise that the creative workforce will need enterprise and project-management skills, so we seek partnerships with other faculties at QUT to maximise our graduates' opportunities. Creative Industries is also different in that we are fundamentally a "lab-based" faculty. In our faculty, the combination of creativity and technology is at the heart of the enterprise in every discipline. Our uniqueness also lies in the range of programs we offer. We have a complete range of vertically integrated programs - from the highest national research and applications research to public courses in audition preparation for young people."⁶⁸

Research needs

Given the high international reputation of Australian new media artists, the general dearth of appropriate resources, the Australia Council's proposed closure of the New Media Arts Board and dispersal of its resources for new media art practice to other boards, and the growing recognition by government of the economic potential and importance of the creative industries in securing a place internationally for Australian cultural production, Big Picture believes that focused resources invested in a Digital Research Centre would enhance Australian leadership in new media research and innovative practice.

⁶⁷ see <http://www.cultureandrecreation.gov.au/cics/> accessed 20/1/04

⁶⁸ see <http://www.creativeindustries.qut.edu.au/index.jsp>

Proposition 20 – The Australian Digital Collection

20.1 The Big Picture believes that the Federal Government needs to make a stronger commitment to the creation of an Australian digital cultural archive by supporting it through specific recurrent funding.

Background

Exposure to an unregulated dynamic medium such as the web is having a profound influence on the way people not only perceive the arts, but the cultural world in general. The educational benefits of the new technology to institutions (museums, galleries, arts organisations) is being harnessed to provide web literate consumers with all manner of information—through portal sites, for example—including notices of forthcoming events, discussion of critical issues, description of art and craft practitioners and works, databases of contacts, suppliers, etc., as well as things such as codes of practice, art and craft practitioners' rights, etc., (for example, those produced by NAVA and Arts Law). Thus we could say that the medium itself is contributing to changes in community attitudes towards the arts, as well as to the art sector as a community in its own right.

Myer and Big Picture research indicates a trend towards the use of new media and interactive displays in all museums, including regional galleries. Galleries have been able to engage with new technologies for business practices and sometimes audience development reasons (fuelled by Australian Museums On-line and Federal Government policies), for example, Art Trails Victoria is a virtual tour through regional galleries.⁶⁹ Most galleries have some sort of web presence or are planning one; many have computerised collection information etc. However, many acknowledge that they are unable to show, or find it challenging to show, technologically based work due to costs, increased security issues, lack of facilities and in some cases a perceived lack of audience interest. Lack of interest however, is not always the case – one gallery noted that younger audiences like exhibitions with a video component.

The sort of artwork that is now being made, which is often deliberately reproducible, raises the question of whether the notion of collecting and exhibiting unique art objects will continue to be an important one. The community's greater acceptance of the virtual experience may have an impact on galleries ascribing value based on this "uniqueness". This could impact radically on collecting policies. It also relates to the way galleries are now documenting artworks and making imagery available via computer. The technology now available provides very precise methods of reproducing objects of all kinds. In future it is possible that computer generated images of art objects will allow the audience to manipulate the two dimensional object and gain access to associated educational information in many ways.

⁶⁹ See http://amol.org.au/art_trails/ accessed 20/1/04

Proposition 21 – Community Attitudes, Art Publishing and the Media

21.1 Research needs to be undertaken, in partnership between government, university and arts sectors, to investigate the quality and quantity of coverage of the visual arts and craft within the media to reveal both attitudes and scope.

21.2 In particular, it is very important in influencing public attitudes to the arts that the ABC reverse the trend to diminish and trivialise its arts coverage and return to providing leadership in the extent and quality of its arts coverage by producing exemplary models of Australian arts programs.

21.3 There needs to be an investment of new funds to promote more independent, critical writing in specialist art journals, and to counter the current trend towards linking funding to ‘advertorial’ state or regional coverage in these trade publications.

21.4 To help raise community knowledge of visual arts and craft, the state and territory arts ministries, local government, Australia Council and the university sector need to form partnerships in conjunction with the popular media, to provide incentives (such as industry secondments, writing fellowships and regional arts writing workshops) to enhance the knowledgeable coverage of important arts issues and events.

Background

The twenty-year decline from 1990 to 2000 in VACB support for specialist art journals was accompanied by a corresponding increase in ‘lifestyle’ arts coverage, both in the mass media and in the plethora of advertising, lifestyle, fashion and design magazines, and on television. The popularisation of the visual arts, crafts and design, and as commodities, advertising or product placement, hobbies and entertainment is packaged through television infotainment and reality TV, and through editorial homogenization in our daily metropolitan newspapers like *Domain*, *Body & Soul*, *Icon*, *Metropolitan* and *Arts* sections. This form of presentation evidences that the visual arts and craft are not the sole domain of the cultural elites, despite One Nation or more conservative Coalition rhetoric.

Empirical research of arts coverage in the popular media may validate the anecdotal evidence suggesting the arts are an important component of the Australian consumer lifestyle. History shows the complementary role played by specialist and lifestyle journals, both in public arts education and informed artistic debate. The influential Sydney Ure Smith inter-war publications *Art in Australia* and *The Home* are good examples. Despite an increase in the VACB’s support for art journals since 2004, in the current climate, both artists and writers report that the dominance of popular, lifestyle journalism and uncritical exhibition promotions is stifling independent and diverse voices.

ABC Arts Programming

The *Report on Arts Programming on the ABC* by Liz Jacka, published in 2004 was a highly critical analysis and included the findings that:

- “the amount of arts coverage on all radio and television diminished in the years between 1992 and 2002...
- the ABC has addressed changing audience demographics by changing the style of programming from “specialist’ to “flow programming” in an attempt to win bigger and younger audiences.
- the ABC does not seem to have embraced wholeheartedly the newer art forms, coverage of which would attract younger viewers, especially if the potential of on-line media were fully exploited.
- this has led to a diminution of the quality and depth of arts coverage and to the level of expertise and specialisation applied in the production of arts programming.
- there is less coverage of arts issues and less analysis of arts policies across all platforms.”

Some public debate followed this report and denial by the ABC; however, the trend seems to have continued into 2005 programming. Though visual arts discussion is included in some general arts programs like the Deep End and the Sunday arts program on ABC Radio National, there is no program dedicated to the visual arts with specialist staff. The deleterious result is discussed under Art Publishing below.

Art Publishing

From a high point in the mid-1980s, there has been a decline in the quantity and quality of specialist art journals in Australia. The few national journals now serving the visual arts industry like *Eyeline*, *Artlink* or *Art Monthly*, are hamstrung by the need to garner support from a mix of advertising and state and federal funding bodies. Tight state ministry budgets mean restricted and conditional support, usually in the form of supporting a state-specific round-up, supplement or state-centric thematic issue could be thought to be ministry-sponsored ‘advertorial’ journalism.

This in turn feeds the pressures of careerism for both writers and artists, replacing traditional, practice-based ideas of professional development. Art journal reviews are often reviews in name only, for they primarily function as publicity rather than critical debate. As the Big Picture Report on Individual Artists observes from artists’ interviews, “reviews of and writing on their work is useful in regards to exposure, and the validation of their practice, it has little critical impact on the trajectory of their work... one wonders what impact it has on shaping art production in this country other than as a means of publicity.” Artist-curator Aaron Seeto elaborated that this has contributed to a “dumbing down” in traditionally critical media, suggesting that many of these types of media are becoming akin to “life style magazines”. This blurring of identity between art journals

and the plethora of lifestyle, fashion and design ‘glossies’ on our newsstands has exacerbated a growing lack of knowledgeable, critical and independent arts writing.⁷⁰

More successful ‘glossies’ seek broader readerships. *Australian Artist* and *Australian Art Collector* have stronger general distribution networks, ensuring their popularity amongst the huge market of amateur artists, students and art-lovers. *Art & Australia* alone can claim a broad industry and general readership, and an independent if non-controversial stance, based on a firm advertising base and the huge secondary education and library markets.

Other magazines which do well in a competitive market are funded journals that are cheaply produced, for example, *Realtime*’s tabloid and e-journal form, cross art-form coverage and inter-disciplinary critical writing. Some metropolitan art and communications students with sophisticated Internet access (e.g. *Artwrite*, supported by CoFA, UNSW) have pursued the cheaper option of critical e-journals. These important resources should be supported to maintain continuity.

Catalogues and Websites

The Big Picture reports that CAOs organisations are publishing catalogues, anthologies and monographs (for example, IMA, Brisbane and Artspace, Sydney) – activities that were once the sole province of art publishers, university presses and museums.

Publishing is usually done on the cheap or in conjunction with a commercial gallery, and now forms an increasingly large part of project funding.⁷¹

Artists’ promotional material, ARI documentation and catalogues have meant that most project funding applications now have built-in website or exhibition catalogue and marketing costing. Artists use these as portfolios, etc., and as sites for research, communication and critical response (artist-audience feedback links). The ARI-style website is now very common in urban ARIs and art school exhibition showcases.

⁷⁰ Discussed in B. French, *Big Picture Roundtable interviews*, unpublished

⁷¹ See B. French, Big Picture research reports and interviews, *Contemporary Art Space, Artist-Run Initiatives*