

Standing Committee on Employment, Education and Training

18th July 2017

NAVA Submission re Inquiry into School to Work Transition

The National Association for the Visual Arts (NAVA) is pleased to provide this submission in response to the Australian Government's Inquiry into School to Work transition.

NAVA is the national peak body protecting and promoting the professional interests of the Australian visual and media arts, craft and design sector. It provides advocacy and leadership, sets and monitors compliance with best practice standards for the industry and delivers a range of services for its members and the arts community more generally. These services include helping to increase artists' professionalism by offering career development opportunities through a variety of on-line and face-to-face training, professional development resources, small grants programs, expert advice and referrals.

As an industry representative body and a professional development training provider, NAVA has a keen interest in the way in which governments act to determine the environment in which children are provided with education in arts and culture and those who choose, are facilitated to take the journey towards becoming visual arts professionals. All children have the right to be provided with appropriate educational opportunities to optimise their creative capabilities and draw on these to effectively contribute their ideas and innovative products and services to the community.

Overview of Barriers to Success

The major problem in relation to the pathway through school to work is the lack of an overview of how each element of a student's progression through education into work is related to and has impact on the next. The division of policy responsibility between states/territories and the Commonwealth and between different government departments has led to silo thinking. What is lacking is the provision of a properly resourced, logical, sequential trajectory. NAVA congratulates the Government on opening this opportunity to address this problem.

For our sector, despite the recent inclusion of the arts in the national curriculum for schools, each state/territory makes its own decisions and the pre-service training of primary teachers to deliver the curriculum for any of the five arts areas is perfunctory. By the time students reach the higher levels of secondary school it is likely that the opportunity for them to be able to choose to study a particular artform will have diminished or disappeared, especially in government schools.

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Patrons: Pat Corrigan AM, Mrs Janet Homes à Court AC, Professor David Throsby AO. ACN 003 229 285 / ABN 16 003 229 285

Then students have two formal choices: a university based art school; or VET training. In too many cases, cuts to the funding of art schools have resulted in them shrinking their options, closing down or amalgamating. The state of VET training has been seriously compromised in recent years with the cutting of TAFE funding resulting in loss of many course options or privatisation through the RTOs.

The roting scandals which have characterized this privatization process have resulted in a drastic move being taken by the Education Minister in 2016 to cut a substantial number of arts courses from the VET Fee Help scheme. This has caused serious disruption to some very reputable providers as collateral damage.

Even then if the students finish a course of tertiary training, there are too many obstacles in practice to them being able to sustain a career in the arts. Disruptions to government funding in 2015/16 have resulted in an estimated cut of 70% to grants for artists and the loss of 4-year operational funding for 50% of visual arts organisations previously funded by the Australia Council, which support the production and presentation of artworks.

Many artists will draw on the skills they have learned and apply them in a range of both arts related work or in a wide variety of non-arts fields in which these skills are a valuable asset. For those who want to make a career as an artist, the industrial conditions for artists do not match those for the general population. The result is that most artists have to subsidise their art practice by taking on other sometimes quite unrelated work and the community is the loser. The arts are an essential contributor to the quality of life for all Australians and if the pathway for those who have the ability to be professional artists is too onerous or inaccessible for them to have sustainable careers, the cultural life of the community suffers.

In addition, all the predictions about the future of work tell us that for all working people Australia should be nurturing the kinds of talents that are characteristic of artists. An arts training helps students to develop entrepreneurial, innovative and exploratory thinking skills and communication capacity which is evidently becoming increasingly essential for the 21st century work environment.

Future Work Predictions

Informed predictions about the jobs of the future reveal that automation and artificial intelligence are changing the skills needs of the future. In planning for employment in the 21st Century, it is important to take account of the changing nature of work. 'Work' can be too narrowly defined as employment by others rather than recognising the diverse roles of self-employed entrepreneurs who may have portfolio careers, including international work.

An [Oxford study](#)¹ identified that 47% of workers will be replaced by 2050, but this is less likely if they work in the creative industries. Here they learn the skills of creativity, agility, intellectual curiosity, resourcefulness, entrepreneurship and the courage to take risks; qualities which are increasingly necessary for the 21st century working environment and valued by employers, commissioners and partners.

¹http://www.oxfordmartin.ox.ac.uk/downloads/reports/Ct_GPS_Technology_Work.pdf

In 2013, The Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) published an extensive review of arts education² focusing on the relationship between The Arts and Innovation. The report found that:

“arts graduates are likely to have the complex set of skills that are useful in highly innovative occupations ...(but) innovation usually tends to focus on skills in science and engineering.”

As the Inquiry Committee may be aware, the 2015 Report of the Committee for Economic Development of Australia (CEDA)³ about the jobs of the future reveals how our skills needs are changing. It predicts that almost 40 per cent of Australian jobs will become redundant in 10 to 15 years. It singled out jobs that involved *“low levels of social interaction, low levels of creativity, or low levels of mobility and dexterity”* as most likely to be replaced by automation. It indicated that the trend was towards highly skilled, agile, self-employed people who were capable in the areas of *“architecting, designing and analysing”*, being those who would form a substantial proportion of the workforce of the future.

‘Creative Trident’ mapping⁴ reveals that in a number of economies the creative workforce is growing at a faster rate than the general economy, and that on average the creative workforce earns salaries above national averages.

Other useful research about early career artists’ employment trajectories has been published by the Australia Council for the Arts (see Longitudinal Study of Early Career Artists)⁵.

NAVA contends that the Government’s current preoccupation with promoting science, technology, engineering and maths (STEM) alone as the wellsprings of creativity and innovation takes too narrow a view. As has been increasingly recognised and embraced around the world, arts and culture should be understood to generate essential and complementary benefits to those of STEM.

NAVA has been concerned that the pathway which starts at school and should continue through further education into the arts and other professions, is far from seamless. There are several school to work challenges relevant to this Inquiry which we believe are creating barriers for students, as follows.

1. Measurements of gain in school and how this contributes to supporting students to prepare for post-school education and training

In 2008, the Melbourne Declaration on Educational Goals for Young Australians was agreed to by all Australian education ministers. It committed to supporting *“all young Australians to become successful learners, confident and creative individuals, and active and informed citizens”*. This document provided the scope for the development of the Australian Curriculum.

² Wanner, E., T. Godstein and S. Vincent-Lancrin (2013), *Art for Art’s Sake? Overview*, OECD Publishing.

³ Australia’s Future Workforce? June 2015, Committee for Economic Development of Australia

⁴ <http://www.cceda.edu.au/projects/creative-employment-mapping-and-creative-business-benchmark>

⁵ [http://www.austlii.edu.au/other/australiancourts/other/longitudinal-study-of-early-career-artists/](http://www.austlii.edu.au/au/other/australiancourts/other/longitudinal-study-of-early-career-artists/)

For many years the National Advocates for Arts Education (NAAE) group (of which NAVA is a member), campaigned vigorously for the arts to be included in the national curriculum for schools and advised at every stage of its development. Finally, it was approved for roll out in 2014 as part of the entitlement of students in all states and territories to a coherent high quality arts education. The Australian Curriculum: The Arts provides a rationale and specifies curriculum content from Foundation to Year 10 for five artforms: Dance, Drama, Media Arts, Music and Visual Arts. However, more recently the arts are being displaced in the curriculum by a new emphasis on STEM subjects taking precedence. STEM rhetoric is shaping resourcing in schools, and parent/principal expectations of student outcomes. Prioritising only STEM (plus agriculture) is illogical. The assumption is made that STEM studies and agriculture will get you a job, whereas the latest employment figures show that [jobs in agricultural industries are actually falling](#)).⁶ Continuing STEM prioritisation ignores the latest research which shows that arts learning contributes to higher levels of innovative and creative thinking in all industries. STEM needs the inclusion of arts input, e.g. design thinking, problem solving, motivation, embodied engagement, experiential sensory engagement and effective communication.

Recommendation 1:

1.1 That the Arts be required to be given at least equal priority and emphasis to STEM in the national curriculum for schools.

1.2 That the Arts should be integral to the Government's Innovation and Education agendas either in a stand-alone capacity or added to STEM to become STEAM by including 'A' for Arts.

2. Opportunities to better inform and support students in relation to post-school education and training including use of employment outcomes of students who undertake school-based vocational education or post-school tertiary pathways

2.1 TAFE and VET Student loans

In recent years, cuts to government funding have decimated the TAFE system and caused serious problems with private providers rorting the system to such an extent that the Government has (somewhat belatedly) had to intervene to stop the haemorrhaging of government funds.

NAVA supports the review of the VET FEE-HELP rules, and understands the need to weed out those private providers delivering sub-standard courses as measured against the Australian Quality Framework (AQF) that applies to all post-compulsory education. However, we have major concerns about the methodology used to identify courses that will no longer qualify for government assistance. Eliminating courses rather than properly researching rogue RTOs and closing them down has had serious unintended consequences for arts education and training, one of Australia's major industry employers.

⁶ <http://data.worldbank.org/indicator/SL.AGR.EMPL.ZS?locations=AU>

Culturally valuable courses that contribute to Australia's strong employment record in the arts have been eliminated, closing off many arts training options for students and creating barriers for our internationally recognised institutions such as VCA, NIDA, the Australian Ballet School, WAAPA, NICA, the Photography Studies College, Design Centre Enmore and more.

In relation to the caps on loans, arts courses are labour/studio intensive and not deliverable online, with some taking five years in mentored learning. Even the highest cap \$15,000 can be completely inadequate depending on the required studio access and degree of intensive face to face training required.

Recommendations 2.1

2.1.1 With a view to fixing the rorting of the VET student loans scheme, that the Government reviews RTOs rather than courses, to identify and support those that legitimately and authentically train artists for work in the creative and cultural industries.

2.1.2 That student loans are restored for legitimate arts courses and that an economic study be made of the actual cost of delivering a diploma or advanced diploma in the arts in order to revise the fee caps payable in the creative industries.

2.1.3 That funding for TAFEs around the country be allocated at a level that will ensure the viability of those providing essential legitimate arts training.

2.2. Challenges for Art Schools

Clearly higher education is a complex ecosystem with its own language and rules. However, immediately apparent is that the diminution of funding is forcing some undesirable changes. The size of the levy taken by the university and undergraduate and higher degree enrolment numbers are the key to how much funding is made available to provide what is offered for students.

Increasingly, the university based art schools are having to deal with the problems of diminishing staff numbers and those remaining having to shoulder a greater administrative load, insecurity with the loss of the tenure system, less contract staff, an increasingly crowded marketplace for the lucrative international students, and the authority of the word over the visual image ie the pressure to publish in order to gain university brownie points. Research using visual tools is not well understood or rewarded within the university system.

While some changes to art schools have had positive outcomes, there have been losses. Examples are art schools at the universities of Western Sydney and Southern Cross NSW which have closed. In an attempt to alleviate the impact, Western Sydney Institute of TAFE providing Diploma and Advanced Diploma qualifications has now has partnered with Federation University to offer a bachelor degree; and the Central Institute of Technology School of Art Design and Media in WA offers associate degrees.

Various other forms of amalgamation have occurred to create economies of scale. In both South Australia and at Monash University in Victoria, the art school was joined with architecture and design. In Tasmania, the Hobart and Launceston art schools have amalgamated into one institution with two campuses. In Sydney there was recently a very controversial move to join up UNSW Art & Design with Sydney College of the Arts (SCA) and the National Art School. Though this did not go ahead, it resulted in the radical diminution of the scale and scope of SCA which was previously an internationally highly regarded institution.

Since the Dawkins reforms in the 1990s, the uncomfortable location of art schools within the universities has progressively shifted their focus to conform to a one-size-fits-all model, and disadvantaged them in terms of government funding provision.

To meet the changing demands of the 21st Century Australian economy and achieve high levels of creativity and innovation capacity, in addition to training professional artists, NAVA proposes that the kind of arts training provided by the art schools should be integrated across other areas of university learning. These arts methods and processes could expand the capacity of all students to imagine, explore, represent and effectively communicate new ideas.

As the Government must be aware, countries that are able to position their workforce as highly creative and innovative will be better placed to attract capital investment, business partnerships and country-to-country co-operation and collaboration. The Government understands that it must embrace and invest in the kinds of training that produces workers with these skills. As is being increasingly asserted both by academics and by industry, it is not only in the areas of science and technology that these skills are evident, but equally in cultural enterprises.

There is clearly a need for a comprehensive review of the ways in which the needs of the arts industry and the workforce as a whole are being met by arts training and education institutions in Australia.

Recommendation 2.2:

That research be undertaken into the current funding for and scope of art schools within the universities with a view to identifying steps to be taken to ensure adequate high quality art school education is available in each capital city around the country.

3. Other related matters that the Committee considers relevant.

3.1 Industrial Conditions for Arts Professionals

For students to reasonably contemplate life as a professional artist, there need to be changes to working conditions which make it more viable for them to be able to achieve sustainable careers over their lifetimes. The rights of professional artists are still lagging behind those of other working people. While there have been some wins (like the regulations covering copyright, moral rights, resale royalties, income tax claim conditions, etc), these hard-won rights are precarious and there is still a lack of industrial fairness in other areas including the necessity for recognition that a range of professional activities by artists deserve to be paid for.

NAVA's current 'Fair Pay for Artists' campaign takes up three of the issues:

- artists' fees
- artists' and art workers' superannuation
- artists income supplement pension.

3.2 Artist Fees

It is widely understood that artworks have a financial value and can be bought and sold, but there is less clarity about what artists should be paid for their time eg if their work is commissioned or loaned for exhibition in public galleries or public events like festivals.

Internationally, there is an understanding that the effort artists undertake in developing a concept, realising it through making a work and then exhibiting it for public enjoyment, deserves the same recompense as is required by all other professionals who are paid for their labour as well as covering the cost of any materials and equipment they use in their work.

3.3 Social Security

In Australia, artists often find it difficult to get recognition of their professional status. For example, when they require social security assistance, it seems Centrelink largely regards art as a 'lifestyle choice' (to quote a recent statement by the Education Minister when defending his excision of many art courses from the VET Student Loan Scheme). Professional artists are not assisted to find work relevant to their career ambitions.

3.4 Superannuation

Also, artists are usually not paid superannuation when they provide work for a public exhibition because the rules are somewhat open to interpretation. So that the concept of an 'employee' for superannuation purposes is legally extended to include the work of visual artists, sole traders and contractors, a change is needed to section 12(8)(a) of the Superannuation Guarantee (Administration) Act 1992 (Cth), to extend the concept of employee to include the word 'exhibition' as follows:

*"a person who is paid to perform or present, or to participate in the performance or presentation of, any music, play, dance, entertainment, sport, display, **exhibition** or promotional activity or any similar activity involving the exercise of intellectual, artistic, musical, physical or other personal skills".*

3.5 Income Supplement

In many other countries which value their artists, there is a commitment to assist artists to make a sustained living from their practice across their lifetimes. Imaginative measures have been adopted to make sure that artists are supported when their income drops below a certain level. NAVA's campaign includes a call for the introduction of an Artists Income Supplement pension scheme. Pensions would be paid when professional artists' incomes drop below the poverty line to bring them up to the level of the minimum wage.

To distinguish between professional artists and hobbyists and prove their eligibility, applicants would be assessed against the criteria used in the Australian Tax Office ruling.

The following are some recommendations for the Government to take action which would produce a more conducive working environment for art professionals.

Recommendations 3:

3.1 That all government arts funding bodies make it a condition of grant that artists' fees must be paid at least at the arts industry rates recommended in the NAVA Code;

3.2 That there is a new matched allocation between the federal and state/territory governments towards an Artists Fees Fund of \$5 million a year to enable the payment of artists' fees by underfunded public galleries, at least at the standard rate listed in the NAVA Code of Practice for the Professional Australian Visual Arts, Craft and Design Sector;

3.3 That artists be deemed to be employees for superannuation purposes when they loan or are commissioned to make a work for public exhibition;

3.4 That artists' professional status is recognised by Centrelink when they require social security assistance;

3.5 That the Government introduces an Artists Income Supplement pension scheme for professional artists to be paid when their incomes drop below the poverty line to bring it up to the level of the minimum wage.

If the above recommendations are taken up by the Government, NAVA believes that for students a much smoother pathway would be available through school to work and the result would be a boost to Australia's innovation capacity and output and a culturally much richer community.

NAVA would be happy to speak to this submission or provide further information as required.

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