

1. OVERVIEW

The conduct of the inquiry

1.1 The Senate referred the inquiry to the Committee on 24 February 1994. The terms of reference are shown in APPENDIX 1. The Committee advertised the inquiry in *The Australian* on 13 April 1994 and in the *University and Higher Education Bulletin* on 15 April 1994, and wrote to many bodies soliciting submissions. The Committee received 131 submissions and heard 185 witnesses (representing 94 of the submissions) at 12 hearings. Details are in APPENDIX 2 and APPENDIX 3.

1.2 This report, originally intended for December 1994, was delayed by a restructuring of the Senate Committee system in October 1994 which resulted in a turnover of most members of the Committee.

Limitations of the inquiry

1.3 The Committee relied for most of its information on the written submissions and evidence at hearings. Regrettably, we did not have the resources to undertake significant independent information-gathering or original research. Minor research was undertaken on a few topics where this seemed most necessary to form a balanced view. A glance at the footnote references will show the range of the Committee's sources on the various topics.

1.4 This procedure has several limitations. Firstly: some inquiries, by their nature, elicit submissions from opposing camps. In this case the submissions were almost all from arts educators who felt that the status and resources allocated to the arts are insufficient. The Committee was always conscious of the need to remember that other disciplines also have their problems in the education system. Few witnesses grappled with questions of how important their problems are compared with other people's problems, how their demands should be accommodated within a limited total budget, or how, in principle, a *balanced* school curriculum is decided. We did not hear what science teachers or geography teachers would think of giving more time to arts.

1.5 Secondly: the submissions are reasonably representative of most major interests among arts educators. They told us of problems in primary schools, secondary schools and universities; they came from city and country; from government departments, professional groups, and individuals (mostly teachers); from all States and Territories. However, some interests were not well represented. The Committee does not feel it knows enough about gender issues; about equity issues and minorities' issues (particularly the participation of Aboriginal people and non-English speakers); about the arts in Open Learning and Distance Education and the Technical and Further Education (TAFE) sector; about the role of Local Councils in fostering

community cultural life;¹ about the important ‘parallel sector’, which includes things like museums and arts galleries, adult and community education, and private tuition.² For most of these it is natural that fewer submissions were made as they are less represented by professional organisations; but that is not to say that they are less important.

1.6 This is not meant as a slight on the few submissions that did deal specially with these areas. The Committee is grateful for that context. But we prefer to flag these as important areas for further investigation rather than to attempt what would be a superficial treatment here.

1.7 Thirdly: many submissions included figures, graphs and tables. The information so presented, taken as a whole, is confusing - snapshots with different dates and sources, mostly with incomparable formats, mostly lacking the information about contexts and trends that is essential to draw valid broad conclusions. To supplement and make sense of the statistics presented is itself a major research project - particularly since any research on State government activities must be multiplied by eight to be complete.³

1.8 In the light of these limitations this report is mostly about attitudes and ideas rather than statistics. Where examples quoted refer to particular states or institutions they should be regarded only as illustrations: we have not been able to verify whether they are typical situations Australia-wide. This report is not about trends in education generally (though some trends are mentioned where relevant), nor is it about the general effects of major cuts to some States’ education budgets in recent years: it is about problems that appear to be distinctive or disproportionate for the arts. We stress this does *not* mean the Committee regards the major cuts to some States’ education budgets in recent years as a happy situation.

1.9 The Committee has also been mindful of the limits of Commonwealth involvement in education. Constitutionally education is a State responsibility. For

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- 1 Local Government councils disburse about 17 per cent of the public subsidy to cultural activities. About half of this money is for public libraries. Expenditure on community services has increased in recent years to about 9 per cent of total Local Government outlays. There is potential for Local Government to have an increasing role in community services outside the traditional ‘roads and rubbish’ as a result of recent reforms to Local Government Acts. Department of Communications and the Arts and Australian Bureau of Statistics, *Cultural Trends in Australia: No. 1 - Statistical Overview*, May 1994, p11; Australia Council, *The Arts - Some Australian Data*, 4th ed. 1991, p71.
 - 2 For adult and community education see *Come in Cinderella - the emergence of adult and community education*, report of the Senate Standing Committee on Employment, Education & Training, November 1991.
 - 3 The *National Report on Schooling in Australia*, an initiative of the 1989 *Hobart Declaration on Schooling* (see APPENDIX 4), is an important step towards nationally comparable information-gathering, but it still has many gaps, particularly in the area of reporting educational outcomes. This is discussed in the Senate Employment, Education and Training References Committee’s report, *Accountability in Commonwealth-State Funding Arrangements in Education*, June 1995, pp32ff.

historical reasons the Commonwealth is involved in various ways in the several sectors. It provides about \$4.5 billion or 75 per cent of the funding of the university sector. In 1992-93 it provided \$660 million or about 30 per cent of the funding of the vocational training (Technical and Further Education) sector; it has been leading a program of national reform in this area, and funding has recently increased significantly beyond 30 per cent with the establishment of the Australian National Training Authority on 1 January 1994. As for school education, the Commonwealth provides about \$3 billion a year in general grants to support State and non-government schools, being 12 per cent of the cost of State schools and 37 per cent of the cost of non-government schools. As well the Commonwealth has a number of special purpose grant programs for schools relating to national priorities such as access and equity, initiatives for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, and languages other than English. In all, the Commonwealth provides about 21 per cent of total public sector spending on schools.

1.10 This report focuses on matters where there is a major Commonwealth involvement. It focuses on the implications for the arts of some major educational initiatives of recent years - namely, the National Curriculum for schools, the introduction of 'Key Competencies' into schools, and reforms to universities consequent upon the creation of the Unified National System of universities from 1988. The recommendations are mostly of a strategic character focussing on the Commonwealth's national co-ordination and overview role in education. They avoid recommendations that might be interpreted as 'special favours for the arts' - their underlying theme is the need to monitor, pre-empt and remedy the unintended side effects of change not just in the arts, but everywhere. The report does not try to deal with the details of curriculum design, important though this topic is, as this is primarily in the hands of the States and Territories.

Defining 'the arts'

1.11 The Committee allowed the scope of 'the arts' for the purpose of this inquiry to fall out of the submissions received. The vast majority interpreted 'the arts' along the lines of the National Curriculum for schools now under development (see chapter 3). This names five main artforms: dance, drama, media, music and visual arts.⁴

1.12 This is a practical response, given that the inquiry is about educational institutions and most submissions came from teachers. It is not a complete response. It ignores creative writing - yet most Australians probably buy a book more often than a theatre ticket. It marginalises craft. It ignores film. It ignores the special characteristics

4 Traditionally in universities 'arts' is also used to mean humanities - as in 'Bachelor of Arts'. This report is *not* about the humanities generally.

of hybrid arts, indigenous arts, computer generated arts, multimedia.⁵ It ignores the crucial role of television in our cultural life -⁶

‘Television is the most influential medium in contemporary Australian society and children spend, on average, more time watching television than they do in formal education.’ (Australian Children’s Television Foundation, submission 37 p428)

1.13 It ignores the crossover between the arts and folklife; between the arts and industrial design; between the arts, architecture and urban design, so important for the quality of life in our cities.⁷

‘The terms of reference appear to have a limited vision of the nature of the arts. Applied Arts are not mentioned here nor are the crafts. It should be emphasised that for most people contact with the visual arts is through applied arts, crafts and the visual communications media....[In the University of Canberra’s architecture, landscape architecture, industrial design and graphic design courses] a large part of each course is devoted to encouraging students to develop their creativity and to expand their visual vocabulary...’ (Prof. Judith Brine, submission 44 p514)

1.14 The assumptions made in the submissions about the scope of ‘the arts’ reflect wider public attitudes. In a 1994 Australia Council survey, for example, respondents overwhelmingly defined ‘the arts’ in terms of high profile professional live performance - things like painting, sculpture, galleries, plays, ballet, dance, music, concerts, opera. Few people, unprompted, see a connection between ‘the arts’ and film, television, books or crafts, and practically no-one sees a connection between ‘the arts’ and architecture. See Figure 1.⁸

1.15 To keep the present inquiry manageable the Committee has followed the lead of the submissions. However, we stress that the omissions are important.⁹ In particular

5 Of the five National Curriculum artforms, the inquiry received hardly any submissions representing ‘media’.

6 In total household expenditure 1988-89, books, newspapers and magazines (\$1,640 million), TV and video equipment (\$1,770 million), home music listening (\$810 million), and cinema tickets (\$199 million), sum to \$4,419 million - about four times as much as items (such as theatre tickets, cultural lessons, musical instruments) that broadly correspond to ‘the arts’ as treated by most submissions to this inquiry (\$1,037 million). The figure for TV and video equipment of course does not include what we pay for TV *programs* through the prices of goods advertised on TV. See Figure 4. Department of Communications and the Arts & Australian Bureau of Statistics, *Cultural Trends in Australia - No. 1: Statistical Overview*, May 1994, p17.

7 Commentators often see a link between the mediocre design of our cities (Robin Boyd’s ‘Australian Ugliness’) and the lack of public debate on urban design issues, other the occasional spat over some prestigious central-city site.

8 McDonnell, J.S., *Public Attitudes to the Arts 1994*, Australia Council, February 1995, pp23,25.

9 As well it should be noted that while most submissions followed the lead of the National Curriculum’s categorisation of five ‘key’ artforms, some disputed it, and the National

it is crucial, in discussing ‘the arts’, always to remember that the dominant medium of our culture is *television*; much of what is broadcast on television is ‘the arts’ (predominantly drama); and the quality of our television programs is one of the most important issues of our cultural life.¹⁰

1.16 There are probably complex reasons for this ‘limited vision’ of the arts. Creative writing has traditionally been included in the ‘English’ part of the school curriculum. The distinction between ‘art’ and ‘craft’ is a matter of unending academic debate - a debate of no interest at all to the thousands if not millions of Australians who indulge in craftwork as their creative outlet and are enriched thereby. The Committee suspects that there are probably deeper reasons as well: firstly, perhaps there is an attitude that because commerce ignores the arts, the arts cannot be commercial - ruling out film, television and the commercial book market; secondly, the regrettable mindset of a specialised technological society, in which everyone has their role and a creative life is regarded as a rather alien thing that belongs in a special box marked ‘the arts’, to which only a few people (‘the arts community’) have the key. It would probably never occur to most people that the quality of their urban environment depends crucially on aesthetic judgments. It would probably never occur to most craftwork hobbyists that their activity has the same wellspring from which the Australian Opera draws its nourishment.

Arts education - why bother?

1.17 Most submissions to the inquiry complained, more in sorrow than anger, that arts in school is widely regarded as a ‘frill’. Why should it not be? The Committee heard three main reasons.

Self-expression is fundamental

1.18 In all cultures, at all times in history human beings, as soon as they have satisfied their basic needs for food and shelter, turn to expressing themselves through art. Designs are scratched on stone age potsherds, bison are drawn on the walls of deep caves. Toddlers draw; children play make-believe; adults grow flowers. An imaginative and creative life is a fundamental part of what defines us as human beings. We suppress it to our detriment, for failure to give expression to this intrinsic characteristic diminishes our humanity.

1.19 A society that regards paid work as the ‘real thing’ and creative life as a frill, something rather special that is carried on on behalf of the community by a special

Curriculum documents do not themselves provide any very clear reasons for this categorisation. See paragraph 3.89.

10 Australians spend, on average, 18 minutes per day seeing movies and plays, visiting libraries, art galleries and museums, attending concerts or mass events, and practising hobbies, arts and crafts, combined; and 172 minutes per day watching television. See Figure 5. Australian Bureau of Statistics, *How Australians Use Their Time* (unpublished data) & Australian Bureau of Statistics and Department of Communications and the Arts, *Cultural Trends in Australia - No.1: Statistical Overview*, May 1994.

priestly class ('the arts community'), is an unhealthy society. Arts education must be a strong force which fosters a widespread and general creative life as a counterbalance to the forces of mass production and mass consumption in a specialised materialistic society. The voracious demands of the latter will progressively displace the former unless the importance of the arts in education is strongly and widely asserted.

1.20 In a sense it is already misleading to speak of this under the heading of 'purpose'. Artistic activities do not have a purpose in the same sense that working does; artistic objects do not have a purpose in the same sense that a washing machine does. A washing machine is a means to an end: we value it only because we need clean clothes. A painting on the wall we value for itself: it pleases us. It is a different *type* of value. At the least, artistic and creative acts save us from boredom; at the best, they are one of the ways we express our enjoyment of being alive. It is that which distinguishes us from robots.

How I like the glittering of the sun on these margins, because it flickers so.

Marginal note by an Irish scribe in a 9th century manuscript.

1.21 Curiously, these fundamentals were not much mentioned in submissions to the inquiry: either they were thought too obvious, or too emotional; perhaps arts advocates, who tend to start from a defensive position, feel obliged to marshal first all the 'practical' arguments they can. It was admitted more readily in oral evidence -

'If we lived in a community without art and music, can you imagine how boring it would be? Life would not be worth living, yet somehow that is not valued in any way.' (Prof. David Williams, evidence p1238)

'The arts make you better at something else'

1.22 The second chief argument in support of better arts education was a more pragmatic one. 'Doing the arts' makes you better at something else.

'The National Affiliation of Arts Educators embrace the premises that all learners benefit from arts education and that cultural literacy, which is acquired in a large part through the arts, is fundamental in today's society. Research indicates that arts education activity assists in the development of such high level skills as handling complexity and ambiguity, problem-solving, communication skills, self-discipline and team work. These skills are recognised as essential for success in the new high-technology, high-information, and multicultural world in which we live.' (National Affiliation of Arts Educators, submission 22 p282)

'Sport is commonly seen as the main avenue for young people to enjoy outside the traditional education system; this is certainly reflected in the

allocation of Government funds and education priorities. However music serves many of the same ends - these include team spirit, character-building, cultural benefits, and the opportunity to mix with other people.' (Australian Society for Music Education (ACT Chapter), submission 99 p1234)

1.23 The arts were seen as having a central role in encouraging the habit of creative and innovative thinking - a habit which (quite apart from its personal satisfactions) - will be economically important -

'Excellence and innovation are critical to our collective future in generating the industries we require to enhance the nation's economic and social wellbeing. Creativity and innovation drive not only the cultural industries, but also developments in science, technology, industrial and management practices, all major contributors to our continuing socio-economic growth.....Australia's cultural industries are sunrise industries, geared to the innovation that is requisite to industrial and economic development.' (Arts Training Australia, submission 20 p262)

1.24 Some saw the arts as an important way of confirming cultural identity -

'In a multicultural society facing the next millennium, the arts offer a vital means of addressing issues of cultural identity and ideology.' (Shakespeare Globe Centre Australia, submission 58 p673)

1.25 Some of these benefits veer close to being fundamental goods -

'The Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation in its report published in Britain in 1982 argued a case for the arts in education. Specifically the report identified six areas in which the arts contribute to the education of the individual child through:

- developing the full variety of human intelligence
- developing the ability for creative thought and action
- the education of feeling and sensibility
- the exploration of values
- enhancing understanding of cultural changes and differences
- developing physical and perceptual skills.' (Educational Drama Association of New South Wales Inc., submission 50 p602)

'Australian researchers have demonstrated statistically significant relationship between music instruction and positive performance in such areas as reading comprehension, spelling, mathematics and learning ability (Herbert); listening ability (Tapley); primary mental abilities - verbal, perceptual, number and spatial (Gates) and motor proficiency (Gates).' (Dr Gary McPherson, submission 107 pp1276-7)

'Culture, then, also concerns self-expression and creativity... with a cultural policy we recognise... that the ownership of a heritage and identity, and the means of self-expression and creativity, are essential human needs and essential to the health of society.' (*Creative Nation - Commonwealth Cultural Policy*, October 1994, p5)

1.26 Other benefits have a more pragmatic character, such as the view that our ‘cultural products’ help to ‘create our distinctive national identity on the world stage’¹¹ - a view which may be crudely paraphrased as ‘doing the arts to entertain tourists and/or to show the world that Australia is a civilised country’.

1.27 The Committee agrees that these are important goods, with a small caveat. Few submissions addressed the question of which of these benefits are unique or distinctive benefits of the arts.

1.28 Some such claims no doubt do relate to unique or distinct benefits of the arts -

‘Biological evidence does show today that it is important to develop both hemispheres of the brain. I emphasise that to eliminate arts, music and movement from the curriculum will result in the elimination of growth in one entire segment of human behaviour and thought processing. If school districts, and indeed, entire states, purport to teach the whole child, then art, music and dance must be at the core and the heart of the curriculum, not just frills or icing on the cake.’ (Musica Viva, submission 85 p1000)

‘The absence of practical and manual activity in junior levels can also inhibit the later acquisition of many vocational skills.’ (National Board of Employment, Education and Training, *The Role of Schools in the Vocational Preparation of Australia’s Senior Secondary students: Final Report*, December 1994, p22)

1.29 On the other hand, all subjects open broader horizons, if well taught. Maths is about problem-solving, not just about arithmetic; languages are about cultural understanding, not just about grammar. Creative, innovative, divergent, curious, critical thinking should permeate the school curriculum as well as our life in the community: if it is regarded as the exclusive property of the arts this is not so much a statement about the virtues of the arts as a sad reflection on attitudes that circumscribe creative thinking in other areas.

The arts as ‘industry’ -

1.30 Thirdly, many submissions pointed out that the arts are important in the economy. The ‘cultural industries’ were proudly named as the creators of \$13 billion worth of goods and services each year. They have been variously described as equal to the electricity industry, the road transport industry or the banking industry; bigger than residential building construction or motor vehicles and parts; twice as big as pharmaceutical products and a third more than alcoholic beverages; twice as big as sheep and more than wheat, wool and beef put together.¹² Such statements are often

11 Department of Employment, Education and Training, submission 130 p1618.

12 For example, Australian National University Institute of the Arts, submission 116 p1380. Department of Communications and the Arts, submission 130 p1519. It is ironic that, implicitly, the benchmark for evaluating the arts is comparison with ‘real’ industries.

made without mentioning their definitions and assumptions, which much limits their value. This is discussed further at paragraph 1.34.

1.31 More importantly, the cultural industries are growing relatively fast -

‘...the most recent figures from the Australia Council (1991) show employment in the Arts increased by 21 per cent compared to 3.5 percent growth overall within Australia in the period 1981 to 1986. This growth pattern was surpassed by only one other industry group, that of Finance at 24.6 per cent. During the same period employment in the manufacturing industries decreased by 12.4 per cent. While these figures are now six years old, it must be remembered that they were the figures which contributed to the initiation of our current educational reforms - specifically the manufacturing figure.... By these measures, *the arts industry is clearly one of the more robust in the country.*’ (Australian Society for the Arts in Education, submission 70 p742)

‘The projected annual employment growth rate for recreation and personal services is 2.33 per cent to the year 2001, ranking sixth amongst the Australian Bureau of Statistics’ 21 major industry subdivisions.’ (Department of Employment, Education and Training, submission 130 p1618)

1.32 Since the low point of the recession in early 1993 employment in the cultural industries has grown by 26 per cent - second only to communications with 30 per cent.¹³ This trend is likely to continue as we enter the ‘information age’ of new communications technology, raising important opportunities and issues both for arts educators and for professional artists, alluded to in *Creative Nation*, the Commonwealth’s 1994 cultural policy -

‘This is why the imperatives of the information age and some of its opportunities are addressed here [in *Creative Nation*] in the context of creative and cultural policy. Interactive multi-media has the potential to become a new force in education, art, culture and service and the biggest information business in the world. It will change the way we communicate, the way we learn, the way we do business, the way we create, the way we live our daily lives... Multi-media can provide us with an important new form of cultural expression and a major product to sell to the world... But it is content which is absolutely critical: it is what we put onto the highway that really matters.’ (*Creative Nation - Commonwealth Cultural Policy*, October 1994, p55)

1.33 By these lights, arts education is important not only to train the next generation of professional artists - the producers - but also to raise the next generation of artistic ‘consumers’ - a process known as ‘audience development’, which figures strongly in *Creative Nation*, for example.

13 Australian Financial Review, 31 March 1995.

1.34 The Committee, though glad to note that the arts is an important industry, has listened to such statements about the ‘arts industry’ with mixed feelings. Firstly, because all statistics need to be used with discrimination. For example, the much-quoted figure of \$13 billion is not particularly useful without considering things like the total size of the economy, the things included in the definition of ‘cultural industries’, which of these inclusions are relevant to the present discussion, the importance of activities outside the market economy, whether in any case dollar amounts are a fair proxy for the ‘importance’ of things in some broader sense; and, finally, what all this should *mean* for government policy.

1.35 To place the figure in context, it should also be noted that the \$13 billion represents about 1.9 per cent of Australia’s domestic production; the big ticket items in the \$13 billion were ‘publishing and printing’, ‘architectural services’ and ‘radio and television station services’; about a third of the \$13 billion is accounted for by media advertising; and no more than \$1 billion relates to ‘the arts’ as they were most commonly visualised in submissions to this inquiry (that is, fine arts, visual arts and live performing arts). See Figures 3 and 4.¹⁴ As well, activities outside the market economy are probably more important in the arts than in most industry sectors (see Figures 6 and 7).

1.36 Secondly, the Committee does *not* think that dollar amounts are a fair proxy for the ‘importance’ of things in some broader sense - not necessarily in any field, and certainly not in the case of the arts. Conventional economic theory recognises this with the concept of diminishing marginal utility - Crusoe may have a lot of wood and only a few nails, but that does not mean he values the nails less. Bulky staples and special trace elements are both important in a well-balanced diet; bread and butter activities and the special activities of culture and recreation are both important in a well-balanced life. The arts are much *more* important than their position in economic statistics would suggest.

1.37 The Committee sensed that many witnesses raised the economic statistics because they felt obliged to talk the language of the economics, but knew in their own hearts that this was not the real point. The arts ‘contribute to the economy’ in exactly the same way as *any* activity ‘contributes to the economy’ - but that is not their *purpose*. The purpose of the arts is to do with the human spirit, not with industrial production.

1.38 We feel the need to say this because, when the arts are spoken of as an ‘industry’, there is a risk that they will come to be regarded as *no more than* an industry - a number of goods and services to be produced and consumed in a market economy. Not only does this misrepresent what a creative life is *for*, it also misrepresents what the state of our creative life actually *is*. It elevates commercial performance and ignores the vast spread of amateur and hobby artistic activity; it

14 Department of Communications and the Arts & Australian Bureau of Statistics, *Cultural Trends in Australia - No. 1: Statistical Overview*, May 1994, p15-17.

elevates the paid and ignores the unpaid; it elevates mainstream institutions and ignores widespread private arts tuition and the struggling Community and Adult Education sector; it elevates the arts as a market and ignores the arts as an expression of individual and community spirit and cultural identity.

1.39 In saying this the Committee certainly does not want to appear to be against excellence or professionalism or ‘audience development’. Healthy audiences for professional arts, and a healthy amateur creative life, are two sides of the same coin. Professionals provide role models and a focus for the interest of amateurs; *active* amateurs are more likely to go to see professionals. They support each other. Both are important in expressing community feelings and confirming our cultural identity. The Committee is *not* saying that the Commonwealth should reduce its support for excellence in the arts. We wish only to give some emphasis here to the side of the coin - amateur participation - that is not so often emphasised elsewhere.

1.40 The consequences for education of treating the arts as *no more than* an industry are an inability to recognise creative and innovative thinking -

‘The notion of the arts as an industry can provide no reliable guide to the content of an artist’s education....The distinction between painting as a trade and painting as an art is of central importance in an artist’s education, whereas investigations of the ‘arts industry’ are methodologically incapable of recognising the distinction....Of course, there is no reason to condemn those who can make a living from producing paintings of Mediterranean ports, or of outback scenes with gum trees. Rather, the point is that the arts industry can no more give content to an art education than the book trade could be used as a guide in the teaching of literature.’ (Dr Alan Lee, attachment to submission 46)

1.41 The Committee notes that in line with widespread public perceptions *Creative Nation*, The Commonwealth’s recent cultural policy, displays some of these tendencies. *Creative Nation* is well within the dominant paradigm of production and consumption in a specialised technological society - with its concern for excellence and professional performance, its limited treatment of arts education other than vocational training, and its relative silence on the amateur creative life of the community as a whole - whose main function in Australian culture is assumed to be as the consumers of the products of the professionals. These extracts stand as examples of this point -

‘The Commonwealth’s role in cultural development falls into five principal categories -

- nurturing creativity and *excellence*;
- enabling all Australians to *enjoy* the widest possible range of cultural experience;
- preserving Australia’s heritage;
- promoting the expression of Australia’s cultural identity, including its great diversity; and

- developing lively and sustainable cultural *industries*, including those evolving with the *emergence of new technologies*. [emphasis added]

Arts education is twofold - it is the provision of education for practitioners *and for audiences* [emphasis added].’ (*Creative Nation - Commonwealth Cultural Policy*, October 1994, pp12,85) ¹⁵

1.42 As well, we have to say that many submissions to this inquiry from arts educators, in spite of their own best intentions, showed the same underlying tendency. Most silently assumed that ‘doing the arts’ is something everyone does (or should do) *at school*, and *a few* people keep doing, for a living. Most submissions were by, or on behalf of, the school children or the professionals. Many mentioned the wider good of people ‘participating’ in the arts or ‘appreciating’ the arts (as does *Creative Nation*); few tried to define these terms or discussed their implications. Few discussed the place of a widespread amateur creative life in adult happiness. The situation contrasts interestingly with the position of physical education, where it is widely accepted that being physically active is a fundamental good and something that everyone should do *throughout* life.

- or as *creative thinking*?

1.43 The Committee regrets the tendency to see ‘the arts’ primarily as a matter of school education and professional performance. A creative life is a fundamental good, as important for our minds as exercise is for our bodies. By forcing our creative lives to fit the paradigm of production and consumption in a specialised technological society, we entrench the gulf between professional arts and everyday life; we entrench ordinary people’s sense that they themselves are not creative. It is as though we were conditioned to think that ‘doing sport’ meant nothing more or less than watching a professional match - so conditioned, in fact, that we would not even realise that kicking a ball in the park is the same type of activity.¹⁶ ‘Audience development’ - with its connotations of passive consumption - is good, but it is only part of the whole. The confidence to be *creative*, however humbly - the confidence to *do*, not merely to *watch* - is also important. The Committee suggests that the sense of disconnection

15 *Creative Nation* devotes a section of four pages to ‘Education and Training’ (pp85-88). It provides funding to extend the Musica Viva Schools Program to Queensland, South Australia, the Australian Capital Territory and the Northern Territory. It establishes two new national centres of excellence in professional arts training - a National Institute for Indigenous Performing Arts and a National Academy of Music - beside the three existing schools funded through the Commonwealth Communications and the Arts portfolio (Australian Film, Television and Radio School, Australian Ballet School and National Institute of Dramatic Art). The Committee acknowledges that arts of a more amateur and ‘community arts’ nature, though not prominent among the new initiatives of *Creative Nation*, are assisted by a variety of existing programs of the Australia Council and the Commonwealth Department of Communications and the Arts.

16 In a recent Australia Council survey respondents, when unprompted, overwhelmingly defined ‘the arts’ in terms of professional performance. See paragraph 1.14 and Figure 1. McDonnell, J.S., *Public Attitudes to the Arts 1994*, Australia Council, February 1995, p23.

from artistic *creation* which many ordinary people seem to feel is a prime cause of most of the problems mentioned in the rest of this report.

1.44 We speak of people's *sense* of disconnection. In fact, people *are* creative - quietly. There are millions of hobbyists. Probably the most widespread creative activity in Australia is gardening.¹⁷

1.45 And creativity does not belong only to the arts -

‘People can act creatively/divergently in a great many ways and in a great many fields. If we recognise that a footballer who makes divergent play, a householder who decorates in a new way, a gardener who designs a new lay-out for the back yard, a surgeon who invents a better way of performing an operation, a shop-keeper who devises a better selling strategy, etc. etc - as well as painters sculptors, architects, choreographers and film-directors who create new works - are all acting creatively, we will realise that divergent behaviour (‘creativity’) is very widely distributed in the human population. And the creation of art is only a small segment of this. Many are creative but only some are artists!’ (Mr Donald Richardson, submission 97 p1184)

1.46 Innovative thinking is important in all fields of endeavour. William Harvey used it to deduce the circulation of the blood;¹⁸ Galileo used it to show that the moon could not be a perfectly smooth globe, as was demanded by Aristotelian cosmology.¹⁹ Einstein's theory of relativity, it is said, arose from the famously eccentric speculation: what would it be like to ride on a beam of light? A prime merit of arts education should be that nurturing innovative thinking in a context where it is explicitly approved may give people the confidence to carry the same habits into other areas of education and other areas of life.

17 In the 12 months ending March 1993 about 1.6 million Australians over 15 years old ‘worked in cultural activities’ (according to a broad definition of ‘work’) for some time in some capacity, mostly unpaid. A further 1.0 million had a hobby involvement. In an average household the time spent on hobbies and crafts was about the same as reading books, and nearly double the time spent on visiting movies, plays, concerts, art galleries, museums and sports events *combined*. See Figures 5, 6 and 7. Department of Communications and the Arts & Australian Bureau of Statistics, *Cultural Trends in Australia - No. 1: Statistical Overview*, May 1994, pp2,41.

18 His key experiment, which can be repeated in a few seconds, consisted of stroking the veins of his arm with a finger and observing which way the blood flowed back into them. It had never been done before because no-one had thought of it.

19 He reasoned that if the moon was a perfectly smooth globe it would reflect sunlight towards an observer only from a single point, not from its whole surface; just as a painter shows a suit of armour with only a single highlight and the rest black.

Creative thinking in mathematics

The class had been naughty and the teacher was keeping them in. 'I want you to add up all the numbers from one to a hundred,' she said. 'When you've finished you can go home.'

All heads bent over their exercise books. One plus two is three. Plus three is six. Plus four is ten....

All but one. Once child sat thinking for a minute, wrote down a single figure - 5050 - then got up and left.

How did she do it?

Answer at paragraph 1.41

1.47 Aesthetic awareness too is fundamental -

'The aesthetic dimension of human life extends across a wide range of human activities; and we ought to regard it as an inalienable human potentiality, as fundamental as the capacity for language. If a society cannot provide a facilitating environment within which the aesthetic potential of all of its members can find appropriate expression, then that society has failed.' (Australian Society for the Arts in Education, submission 70 p754, quoting Peter Abbs, *Living Powers*)

1.48 - and aesthetic awareness, like creative thinking, though it tends to thought of as a special feature of the arts, belongs everywhere - as, for example, when we speak of an 'elegant' solution in mathematics -

'Buying a car, building and decorating a house, landscaping a garden, all require choices to be made between what is pleasing, beautiful, appropriate, and what is not.' (Australian Society for the Arts in Education, submission 70 p754)

'Even the technicians at Cape Kennedy become poets at the time of lift-off. When the space shuttle goes rocketing successfully into orbit, the engineers don't say, 'Well, our formulas worked again.' Rather they say, almost in unison, 'Beautiful!' I find it fascinating that they choose an aesthetic term to describe a technological achievement.' (Ernest Boyer, President, the Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching)

'Aesthetic principles are at the heart of good physics.' (Donald McCloskey, *Scientific American*, February 1995, p19)

1.49 If ordinary people see themselves as not creative, not aesthetic, this comes from a mistaken view of what creativity and aesthetic awareness are about, influenced by the disconnection between the arts and other forms of creativity, and by the

disconnection between professional arts and their own lives. It is tragic that this should then further dampen their own confidence. To help break down the barriers the 'arts community' itself needs to recognise that neither they nor the arts have a mortgage on creativity. Arts people need to recognise that professional arts and amateur hobbies spring from the same innate creative urge - the difference is one of degree, not of kind. The arts - as part of a creative life - should be regarded not as special, but as normal. It is *excellence* that is special, and should be celebrated as such. Support for widespread participation, while not diminishing support for excellence, should be recognised as an important good in its own right.

Arts education as vocational training

1.50 For those who stress the arts as an 'industry', the view of arts education as training for arts employment follows naturally. But submissions were generally vague about the proper balance in our education system between vocational training and 'general education' in the arts. University practical arts faculties tended to stress the preparation of professional artists; those who saw arts as an industry laid stress on the need to give students the opportunity to enter the industry; those who stressed the 'other benefits' of the arts referred to above (problem-solving, communication skills and so on) regarded these benefits as sufficient justification for the arts as part of the general education of all. These views may be in tension -

'There is a difference between art as a subject in the general education of all children....; the art education of those training to be professional artists, craftspersons or designers; and art as a subject for adults to 'consume' - art appreciation and criticism. There are commonalities to be sure but, whereas creative self-expression is validly the dominant aspect of art in schools (and perhaps, the only valid one for kindergarten children), it cannot be anything like sufficient for the training of professionals.' (Mr Donald Richardson, submission 97 p1186)²⁰

1.51 The position is complicated by underlying attitudes which, in our society, give distinctly separate places to work and leisure -

'Leisure is a circumscribed period when work is allowed to be omitted. Without work to frame its beginning and end, leisure cannot exist. Precisely because unemployment is so dangerously like leisure, except that it lacks these firm boundaries, leisure too becomes a problematic category.... Pursuit of leisure is offered as a goal but failure to work is seen as indigence and irresponsibility. Work acquires deeply contradictory values...' (Ms Trish Meyer, submission 112 p1347)

1.52 This leaves artistic 'work' in a paradoxical position -

'Often we see our society diminish the value of art work done by unemployed or retired people who produce in their leisure time by

20 The tension is probably most acute in secondary schools - see paragraph 2.48.

comparison with the ‘work’ done by professional artists who ‘earn their living’ by producing art works.’ (Ms Trish Meyer, submission 112 p1348)

‘ “For many people the word ‘artist’ conjures a vision of a temperamental romantic leading a carefree life, a bohemian unencumbered by the mundane constraints that beset the ordinary wage-earner. Perhaps it is because for many in the community the arts can be a source of relaxation and leisure that people find it hard to imagine being an artist as a regular workaday occupation or as a lifetime career...” [Australia Council] This overview directly denies the real facts... only about two fifths of all artists spend all their working time on art-related work and only about one in ten spends all of his of her working time at primary creative activity. Out of those two-fifths the majority teach within their artform in order to maintain a reasonable income.’ (Mr Martin Gash, submission 3a p61)

1.53 These ambivalent attitudes flow through to ambivalent attitudes in school. The problem seems to be that the distinct and dominant status of ‘work’ (that is, paid employment) in our society interacts with people’s uncertainty about what the *other* worthwhile outcomes of arts education may be -

‘Many teachers.... tend to avoid or ignore the arts in their teaching or, worse still, confuse art with entertainment, regarding arts activity, like play, as a non-serious pastime and therefore to be accommodated only on the fringe of the curriculum.’ (Mr John Deverall, submission 6 p97)

1.54 Only a few tertiary practical arts graduates will forge careers in the arts. ‘Arts as industry’ submissions tried to put a positive gloss on this: they stressed that the arts is growing industry (using statistics for the *cultural* industries, which, we noted at paragraph 1.35, includes much more than the arts); they referred particularly to the fact that many artists work at art part-time, or do other things first, and so are misrepresented in conventional labour market statistics.

1.55 The Committee acknowledges these points; on the other hand, tertiary arts graduates’ employment prospects in their field are far below average,²¹ and artists’ average incomes are now more pitiful than ever.²² A few submissions suggested that

21 ‘Of 1993 visual and performing arts graduates, only 24.5 per cent were in fulltime employment at 30 April 1993. This compares with an average of 44.1 per cent for all graduates.... Graduates of vocational arts courses are more likely than other graduates to be undertaking work outside their field upon graduation.’ Department of Employment, Education and Training, submission 130 p1611.

22 For practising professional artists, from 1986-87 to 1992-93 average real income from their *creative* work decreased by 19 per cent to \$11,800, and average real income from *all* sources decreased by 13 per cent to \$24,700, compared with an 8 per cent increase for the whole workforce. Most artists also have other work to boost their incomes: only 11 per cent of artists are able to work fulltime at their primary creative activity. In 1992-93 almost two thirds of all artists earned less than \$10,000 from their primary creative activity (all these figures are 1992-93 dollars). D. Throsby and B. Thompson, *But What Do You Do For a Living? - A New Economic Study of Australian Artists*, Australia Council, December 1994.

focussing too much on arts professions as the ideal outcome of tertiary arts training does a disservice to most students -

‘I have heard it suggested at conferences and gatherings of interested professionals that only about 4 per cent or 5 per cent of art school graduates manage to achieve and sustain careers as practising artists, and this damning estimate seems to be widely accepted, though not very openly acknowledged.... the unacceptably poor vocational outcomes of tertiary arts education [is] grounds for criticising the institutions for embracing unrealistic vocational aims to the exclusion of creditable educational objectives, and thereby failing to meet the true interests of their students.’
(Dr Alan Lee, submission 46 p521)

1.56 - or they suggested that there is a gross oversupply of places in tertiary vocational arts courses -

‘It seems that, at any given time, there are *more* students studying to become artists than the total number of artists in the community.... The expatriate Australian Art critic Robert Hughes has recently noted that there are 35,000 painters, sculptors, potters, art historians and so forth, graduating from institutions in America every year, and that at this rate America is producing as many graduates in two years as there were people in Florence at the end of the quattrocento.... “Does this mean we have a new Renaissance?” he asks, and supplies his answer: “Of course not. It means that we have a severe unemployment problem at the bottom and an exaggerated star system at the top of the artist population...”’ (Dr Alan Lee, attachment to submission 46)

Too many artists?

1.57 This is not the place for a dissertation on the merits and problems of trying to fine-tune the education system to meet predicted labour market needs. The Committee makes only two comments.

1.58 Firstly, any such discussion depends critically on exactly what is meant by ‘vocational training’. Vocational in *purpose* (training tailored for a particular occupation or industry which the student aims to enter) or vocational in *results* (training which proves useful in a job of some sort later)? Suppose two students study Ancient Greek (to take the most ‘useless’ subject possible); one goes on to become a professor of Greek; the other, after some detours, lands in the Public Service. Are we to say, with the wisdom of hindsight, that university was vocational for the first but not for the second? Yet neither, at the time of their studies, could have predicted this. Which is more ‘vocational’: education/training that provides a direct passage to a particular job, or that which provide a *less* direct passage to a *number* of possible jobs?

1.59 Predicted outcomes and unpredicted outcomes are both still outcomes; both may have their merits, and the same course of training may contribute to both. The implication of the comment last quoted above is that the purpose of art schools is to

produce Michelangelos, and that other outcomes are a failure. This depends entirely on one's definition of success and failure. Other graduates will go on to become teachers, or to apply their skills of creative and innovative thinking in other fields of endeavour.²³ The way individuals' skills flow through to benefit themselves and the community throughout their lives is unpredictable.²⁴

1.60 Secondly, the position of 'hard' professions is different from that of the humanities. The Committee would agree that labour market planning in education is worthwhile, and may be possible, in areas where the profession is clearly defined, the market for it is definable and predictable, and there is a high content of training that cannot be expected to contribute to unpredicted career outcomes. No doubt it is a waste of money to train too many chicken-sexers; it is no fun for the unemployed chicken-sexers either. But none of these three conditions apply well in the humanities or arts. It is absurd to suggest that the state can calculate the community's 'need' for artists as it can for more definable professions, and fine-tune the education system accordingly.

'Suggestions that vocational outcomes can be in all cases predetermined in the arts is a fallacy. Talents, abilities and opportunities constantly change and, in a world where several career shifts in a working life are increasingly common, rigid, vocationally determined structures are surely inappropriate.' (Queensland University of Technology, submission 23 p295)

'The notion that arts education can be made to fit conventional degree structures, as suggested in the Botsman Report, has elements of absurdity. Nobody can teach an educand to be an artist. There is a capacity to obtain exposure to experiences and useful techniques in the education system, but the bottom line is that the artist controls his or her own development in pursuing what is necessarily an individual goal of excellence.' (Mr Walter Vivian, submission 7 p100)

1.61 The unpredictability of the economy's demands also intervenes -

'What is relevance and who should define it? Let me take Japanese as an example... In recent years there has been an explosion in the teaching of Japanese in our schools and universities. It has come at the expense of the teaching of European languages... Japanese makes sense in the current climate given that country's economy and endless supply of honeymooning newlyweds. Yet what happens if in ten years Indonesia becomes the new economic engineroom of Asia? Do we scramble to strip Japanese teaching

23 '22.4 per cent of 1992 graduates in visual and performing arts were working as artists in April 1993, 13.1 per cent in teaching and 12.5 per cent in design. Other major destinations were sales, management, clerical and photography. It is clear that the generic skills imparted by their higher education courses are very important in increasing the graduates' adaptability to changing circumstances in the workforce.' Department of Employment, Education and Training, submission 130 p1611.

24 The Committee certainly agrees with Dr Lee's other chief concern, that art schools should not mislead students about their prospects.

of funds and pump them into Indonesian?... What, however, happens in twenty years when, as a result of the free trade agreements being concluded across the Americas, Latin America becomes the new economic engine room of the Southern Hemisphere?... Universities cannot be sensitive to the fickle and highly volatile market forces and political imperatives. Language departments cannot be shut down and opened up at the drop of a hat.’ (Mr Jonathan Barlow, submission 9 p111-112)

1.62 The Committee considers that vocational training is only directly purposive when it becomes a *particular* course of training tailored for a *particular* industry or occupation. In our education system this is mostly at the post-secondary level - how it can be brought into the secondary school system, in view of the amount of specialisation necessary, is problematic, and is now the subject of much study and experimentation on the involvement of schools in the new Australian Vocational Training System.²⁵ Otherwise, the outcomes of education are too varied and too unpredictable. The maths/science course of a secondary student aiming at a high tertiary entrance rank and a sought-after profession - which may have little need for detailed maths or science prerequisites - is neither more nor less ‘vocational’ in its *results* than the humanities course of another student without firm ambitions who ends up in an advertising firm or in the public service. Indeed, it may be that the arts, by fostering the higher level skills of adaptability, creative thinking and *flexible* problem-solving that will be needed in the unpredictable economy of the future, are more widely vocational than many subjects. How many people who studied mathematics for 12 years of school ever use more of it than the arithmetic needed to fill in a tax return?

Conclusion on the purposes of arts education

1.63 The prime purpose of arts education for most students is to enrich their educational experience generally: to foster confident self-expression - the desire to *have a go*; to foster creative and innovative thinking that may have the benefit of carrying through into other school disciplines and other areas of life, both in and out of paid employment; to foster the habits of being self-directed and being *involved* - habits which will be ever more important to the self-esteem of many in a future of insecure job prospects and periods of unemployment, as the traditional place of work in people’s identity and self-esteem breaks down. For some who have the desire, the talent and the opportunity to make careers in the arts, the prime purpose of arts education may be vocational; but it must be recognised that these are a small minority.

25 On this see generally Schools Council [of National Board of Employment, Education and Training], *The Role of Schools in the Vocational Preparation of Australia’s Senior Secondary students: Final Report*, December 1994, and Senate Employment, Education and Training References Committee, *Accountability in Commonwealth-State Funding Arrangements in Education*, June 1995, p112ff.

The importance of attitudes

1.64 Art educators feel they are handicapped by negative attitudes towards the arts - from education authorities, from school administrators, from other teachers, from the community.

‘To maintain parity with other subject areas, Arts Educators are continually having to defend and promote their subject area in a way that is alien to many other subjects.’ (Art Craft Teachers’ Association, submission 8 p107)

1.65 Interestingly, no clear view emerged on the attitudes of students. Some submissions regretted that senior secondary students laid too much stress on future jobs; others sought strength in the fact that elective arts subjects have been gaining in popularity (see paragraph 1.102 and following for discussion of trends in enrolments). Some complained that students, adopting the attitudes of their elders, treat arts as not serious; others saw a role for the arts in providing worthwhile experiences for the less academically inclined who, in former years, would not have stayed at school past Year 10 -

‘The arts are a ‘voice’ for the ‘non-achiever’ in the classroom or for minority groups within the broader society especially in respect to the re-establishment of self-esteem.’ (Department of Arts Education, University of New England, submission 10 p125)

1.66 Negative attitudes manifest themselves in big and little ways -

‘Many Catholic primary schools have no art teacher or facility and throughout primary/secondary education it is this subject that is first cut out of the curriculum or funding slashed.’ (Mr John Irving, submission 1 p5)

‘The Government will give a lot of money to a hockey team to travel and get coaching, but try to get some money for an orchestra or a chamber group to go and receive coaching; one meets a great amount of prejudice.’ (Australian String Teachers Association (WA Branch), submission 42 p482)

1.67 Arts educators felt that teachers in other disciplines do not understand the special characteristics of the arts’ ‘ways of knowing’ -

‘However, many teachers are reporting resistance to their participation [in the Schools Shakespeare Festival], not only from reluctant English teachers, but also from other curriculum subjects areas, particularly the Maths/Science areas which place less value on aesthetic ways of knowing, and are sceptical of the perceived subjectivity of arts curriculum practices and assessment methods.’ (Shakespeare Globe Centre Australia, submission 58 p671)

1.68 Their problems are aggravated by the fact that arts teachers tend not to rise high in education hierarchies. As they are often sole operators in schools, they have fewer opportunities to become Subject Heads -

‘Low numbers of arts/dance advocates within educational hierarchies or promotion positions, mean there is often no ‘voice’ for the development and status of quality programs of educational excellence in schools and universities.’ (Australian Dance Council - Ausdance Inc., submission 79 p846)

1.69 Arts educators’ sense of isolation applied particularly to instrumental music teachers, who tend not to be integrated into the regular teaching staff -

‘Within most formal education systems those in ultimate powerful positions are from an academic background which does not respect, acknowledge and understand the intellectual, physical and artistic skills of instrumental music making.... Musicians are never in sufficiently authoritative positions in the education hierarchy.’ (Australian String Teachers Association (WA Branch), submission 42 p479)

1.70 Some also blame education bureaucracies -

‘There is a continued rhetoric of ‘back to basics’ provided by government to the public... Because of this political imperative government is eager to prove that the ‘basics’ are being achieved and consequently introduce assessment or testing strategies. The subject areas English, Maths and Science are usually the only subjects assessed or reported on by government or media. Parents and students quickly get the message that subjects such as the arts are ‘frills’ and not important.’ (Australian Dance Council - Ausdance Inc., submission 79 p855)

1.71 - while others think that on average the arts are treated more kindly in school than in the community at large. They point to the frugal attitudes of parents, particular in times of recession as occurred in the few years before this inquiry -

‘Although it appears school are all too aware of the significance of arts displays, exhibitions and performances to the quality of life within the school and to the reputation of the school in their communities, we believe the importance of arts education, its nature and its purposes may not be well understood by the community at large... in times of more stringent economies there is an important public role to be played in defending and propounding the enduring and consistent value of arts education.’ (Cross Arts Victoria and others, submission 96 p1132)

‘Students, parents and the wider community are not always aware of the role of the arts in Australian life and of the extent of the arts and entertainment industry. There is also pressure because of the economic situation to consider vocational education as more important than the learning areas that may be part of a broad general education.’ (Queensland Department of Education, submission 115 p1375)

1.72 On the other hand, it was said that employers are well aware of the advantages of generic skills as well as academic qualifications -

‘A recent study of employer preferences commissioned by the National Board for Employment, Education and Training indicates that although academic qualifications are an important factor in initial decisions about selection, *employers also value a set of generic competencies....* Employers perceived humanities graduates as having *superior communication skills* to other graduates, as well as social skills and the ability to apply academic learning to a work environment.’ (Arts Queensland, submission 124 p1502)

1.73 If so, it may be that the common perception of parents about what subjects are truly ‘vocational’ is misguided. As discussed from paragraph 1.57 above, it depends on what is really meant by ‘vocational’. The Committee does not think that a Higher School Certificate maths/science course, undertaken in order to get a high tertiary entrance rank, is necessarily any more directly vocational than a humanities course that may have a number of unpredictable outcomes.

1.74 Views of the arts are coloured by the perception that they are not ‘work’, therefore not important -

‘Unfortunately, in the national collection of statistics, courses seen to be for ‘leisure and enrichment’ purposes are often trivialised. Short courses, which are seen as ‘hobby’ or ‘non-vocational’, are overlooked in data collection and are not recognised as education. These types of courses usually embrace all forms of Arts Education.... There is presently a plethora of grants for ‘vocational’ adult education, but any course which may be seen as not connected with training is poorly considered.’ (New South Wales Association of Community Adult Education Centres Inc., submission 28 p338)

Rhetoric versus action

1.75 Obviously this is a complex landscape of interacting influences, in which cause and effect are hard to separate. But an important common thread (not so obvious from the solely negative comments quoted so far) is the ambivalence of attitudes to the arts - the tension between rhetoric and action. People *do* acknowledge the value of the arts, in principle - it’s just not *their* business.

‘In spite of all the theory and advocacy, the high-powered committees, seminars and conferences, the submissions, findings and reports, I still find that when I speak to students [trainee teachers] coming into college or with teachers working in classroom, the arts are invariably approved of in theory but placed into the ‘can’t/don’t/won’t do it’ category when it comes to implementation.’ (Mr John Deverall, submission 6 p97)

1.76 In teachers a large part of this attitude arises from inadequate teacher training and personal lack of confidence, as discussed in chapter 3 below; but the same ambivalence arises in the attitudes of administrators. Principals recognise that arts contribute to the ‘tone’ of the school but, it seems, the commitment does not carry through to accepting the arts into the mainstream of the school’s educational program

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‘The arts are sometimes appreciated only for their public relations value and contribution to the ‘tone’ of the school. There is a concern that performance is seen as the sole purpose of the program, and this public perception has led to the elevation of participation in festivals, eisteddfods and the like above the processes of arts education. A balanced arts education program has both process and product outcomes.’ (Arts Action Coalition of Western Australia, submission 35 p407)

1.77 As a result arts teaching relies on extra-curricular activities more than most subjects. Extra-curricular activities are of course important, and have their special merits in encouraging initiative and volunteerism outside the set curriculum; but *relying* on them tends to leave arts teachers exhausted and resentful (more on this from paragraph 3.18).

1.78 Ambivalent attitudes in schools reflect ambivalent attitudes in society as a whole -

‘On the one hand, the arts are regarded as expendable, at most cathartic or entertainment value, not serious candidates for priority in education. Yet, on the other hand, the powerful possibilities for learning through the arts are clearly conceded in the general nervousness about the arts characteristic of authoritarian régimes.’ (Ms Trish Meyer, submission 112 p1346)

1.79 Ambivalent attitudes underlie the curious results of the Australia Council’s recent survey *Public Attitudes to the Arts 1994*. A vast majority of respondents (88 per cent) agreed that ‘things such as theatres, museums and orchestras make the community a better place for me to live in’; a solid majority (59 per cent) agreed that ‘live theatre, opera and ballet companies and public art galleries’ deserve a public subsidy. On the other hand, 50 per cent *disagreed* that ‘professional artists reflect what life is really like’; and arts ranked only fourth out of six nominated subjects - behind law, economics and current affairs - as ‘important for children to learn at school’ (in fifth and sixth place were politics and religion).²⁶ See Figure 2.

1.80 In summary -

‘Politicians, educators, parents and students all express their belief that the arts are essential learning and yet there is a large gap between the rhetoric and the action, which would indicate that there has to be some other influence operating that continues to reinforce the undervaluing of the arts.’ (Ms Trish Meyer, submission 112 p1334)

1.81 *Creative Nation*, the Commonwealth’s cultural policy (October 1994) exemplifies this ambivalence: it strongly affirms the importance of our cultural life *as a general statement*, but it pays little attention to what this should mean for either the arts education or the adult creative life of the community at large.

26 McDonnell, J.S., *Public Attitudes to the Arts 1994*, Australia Council, February 1995, pp5, 7, 9, 13.

1.82 What are the causes of these ambivalent responses?

‘There have been differing opinions put forward to what this may be.... Statements by people such as Eisner sum up some of these when he makes the claim that “...much of the negative perception that surrounds the arts stems from a ‘massive misunderstanding’ of the role or value of the arts in human development and education...”’ (Ms Trish Meyer, submission 112 p1334)

1.83 The Committee suspects that this misunderstanding arises fundamentally from the nature of our society, in which mass consumption is more important than individual creation, in which work is highly specialised, and the line between work (that is, paid employment) and the rest of life is rigidly drawn. This structure relegates the arts to the box marked ‘leisure’, which is less important than ‘work’ (and, incidentally, it leaves creative/innovative/lateral thinking generally in an in-between position which is probably detrimental to our economic development as well as to our personal fulfilment). It defines the status of ‘artist’ as a specialised occupation, and disconnects ‘the arts’ from the everyday life and the amateur creativity of ordinary people.

1.84 In the Australia Council survey of public attitudes mentioned at paragraph 1.79, for example, this conceptual scheme is apparent both in the answers from respondents (who, unprompted, overwhelmingly defined ‘the arts’ in terms of professional performances) *and* in the design of the survey, which was firmly focused on things like ‘professional artists... performances and exhibitions... theatre, opera and ballet companies...’ (see Figures 1 and 2). It is no surprise then that many people, while acknowledging the value of the arts in the abstract, do *not* think that ‘the arts’, *so defined*, reflect real life or have much to do with *them*.²⁷

1.85 The effects of this conceptual scheme are seen in the uncertainty about what the outcomes of an arts education (other than focused vocational training) should be, and the general vagueness, in submissions to our inquiry, about exactly what ‘appreciating the arts’ and ‘participating in the arts’ are supposed to mean.

‘What does ‘appreciation of the arts’ entail? Talking about it? Making potholders for charity? Knowing where to hang a Brueghel print?’ (Dr Felicity Haynes, submission 91 p1066)

1.86 The negative interactions are expressed neatly in this comment -

‘The main barriers to participation in the arts within educational institutions seem to derive from an attitude amongst educational policy makers that the arts are simply a frill - *something that is done for enjoyment, and therefore is the antithesis of work*.... the ramifications of such one-eyed policy is having a disastrous effect on generations of students, as it perpetuates a

27 McDonnell, J.S., *Public Attitudes to the Arts 1994*, Australia Council, February 1995, pp23, 25 & generally.

myth of the muse descending only on a few talented students, who then create art works *for the enjoyment of the masses*.' [emphasis added]
(Shakespeare Globe Centre Australia, submission 58 p673)

1.87 In saying this the Committee certainly does not want to appear to be against excellence or professionalism or 'audience development'. As noted at paragraph 1.39, healthy audiences for professional arts, and a healthy amateur creative life, are two sides of the same coin. But our attitudes and motivations in speaking of 'audience development' are important. If audiences for professionals are seen as merely *part* of a healthy culture whose *foundation* is a widespread amateur creative life, both the professional and the amateur may prosper together. If 'audience development' is seen narrowly as a matter of 'industry assistance', divorced from community life, probably neither will prosper.

The importance of community involvement

1.88 If a narrow view of 'the arts' as limited to professional performance tends to disconnect the arts from the everyday life and amateur creativity of ordinary people, it also tends to disconnect the arts, *and* by association amateur creativity, from that part of everyday life which is the school system.

'In spite of all the arguments to the contrary, the view that the arts are not integral to the Great Australian Way of Life still seems to prevail, especially at the level of government decision-making. Schooling, however, is compulsory by law, and even though parents and children complain about what goes on in schools (often for quite different reasons), schools do form a constant within the GAWOL.' (Mr John Deverall, submission 6 p96)

1.89 This probably explains the often uneasy relationship between the school system and 'community arts' which appeared in submissions to the inquiry.²⁸

'Despite the best efforts of individuals, when schools performers visit country areas there is often no effort made to extend their stays to allow evening performances. Country people complain that they hear of these visits only after the children have seen the shows. Some of the artists are suitable for putting on adult or family shows which the community would find appealing... the problem is mainly with the Education Departments, and many school teachers who still see their schools as closed communities. Such problems will only be solved through leadership at the top and assistance in developing regional planning structures which can facilitate better integrated cultural planning and co-ordination of resources.' (Arts Council NSW Ltd, submission 81 p947-8)

28 'Community arts' is used here for want of a better catch-phrase, but we note this warning: '*Community arts* as a term creates some terrible communication problems. It is sometimes used to suggest an art form, sometimes as the type of activity which brings about social changes, sometimes as a synonym for amateur arts, sometimes in reference to any arts activity held in a community.' Arts Council NSW Ltd, submission 81 p954.

‘The feeling of many teachers appears to be that, rightly or wrongly, art education starts and ends with secondary school and little, if any credit is given to visual arts experiences from primary school or outside experiences, such as local, community or district art classes or schools.’ (Mr Robert Waters, submission 26 p314)

‘Inclusion of community arts initiatives and youth programs in arts education planning is needed if the total picture is to be addressed.’ (Australian Dance Council - Ausdance Inc., submission 79 p846)

1.90 It is probably a factor in explaining the ‘poor cousin’ status of Community and Adult Education organisations (part of the ‘parallel education sector’), where the arts are popular in ‘leisure and enrichment’ courses -²⁹

‘Aulich [Senate Standing Committee on Employment, Education and Training, *Come in Cinderella - The Emergence of Adult and Community Education*, Canberra, 1994] noted in 1991 the increased demands upon the Adult and Community Education sector, the decrease of government financial support and that those unfamiliar with its operations have tended to devalue its contribution or belittle its efforts. As at 1994 the position is similar.... In NSW TAFE is reducing ‘Stream 1000’ courses; that is, fine arts, crafts, sewing etc. There have been several Adult & Community Education/TAFE committees set up to formulate collective use of resources. However so far it is quite difficult, if not impossible, for ACE to access TAFE resources. As well, TAFE is generously funded, but re-allocation of funds has not eventuated’ (New South Wales Association of Community Adult Education Centres Inc., submission 28 p339)

1.91 As well, the ‘professional production’ view of the arts tends to ignore the vast range of voluntary artistic activities in the community -

‘A major defining characteristic of the parallel system is the extent to which it involves, and depends on volunteers. Yet voluntary cultural activity is understated in most studies.’ (Government of South Australia, submission 109 p1308)

‘In rural and regional areas particularly, the number of volunteers and paraprofessionals working in this ‘parallel education system’ is known to be very large.’ (Arts Queensland, submission 124 p1498)

1.92 A 1993 survey found that, of 1.6 million people involved in cultural ‘work’ (broadly defined) over the previous year, two thirds received no payment and only a sixth were fully paid.³⁰ See Figures 6 and 7.

29 Another factor is the current vocational emphasis in government policy, mentioned at paragraph 1.71.

30 Department of Communications and the Arts & Australian Bureau of Statistics: *Cultural Trends in Australia, No 1: a Statistical Overview*, 1994, p2. ABS catalogue no. 4172.0. ‘Work’ was defined as being involved in an activity, for the benefit of someone outside the

1.93 Community artistic life is important not only for itself, but also for the ways it can complement school education -

‘Schools in Tasmania, through the process of devolution and the development of local school councils, are more responsive to their local community. Arts programs often make use of the range of arts experience and expertise available to them in their local communities. Tasmania has had a strong tradition of arts and crafts activity which schools are connecting with more and more.’ (Government of Tasmania, submission 121 p1464)

‘The exposure of [Curtin University] student teachers to the arts through the years of schooling has largely been on the basis of tuition arranged independently by parents.... Typical examples of this are music tuition, ballet and dance classes and performing arts groups.’ (Faculty of Education, Curtin University, submission 113 p1354)

‘For many who perform music, their performance training has no real-world outcome: when they leave school, they stop playing. This probably is because for many there is no evident place for them to perform. Community programs.... make a place for school leavers to take their musical skills and continue to perform.’ (Music Council of Australia, submission 59 p682)

1.94 But it must be recognised that links between school and community are not a short cut. They should be seen as enriching, not replacing, a school arts program (a matter also mentioned at paragraph 3.21 in relation to the outreach programs of professional companies, and extra-curricular activities generally). It must be recognised that they require initiative and effort to organise -

‘The loss of community programs and the under-utilisation of the community in arts activities is often due to lack of funding allocation.’ (Government of the Northern Territory, submission 27 p325)

1.95 With initiative the results can be astonishing. The Committee was told of community music programs in Orange and the Dandenongs -

‘In 1988 a public meeting was called [in Orange] at which parents complained about the quality and narrowness of music instruction... The Orange Music Association persuaded a somewhat reluctant Orange City Council to give some help in the form of occupancy of a small building it owned... and in 1990 it opened the Orange Music Centre with six instructors and 60 students. The latent hunger of the citizens of Orange for music instruction was demonstrated quite unambiguously. By 1994 the six instructors had grown to 26, and the 60 students had grown to 700.... The formerly lukewarm City Council has become an enthusiast: 26 new jobs are not to be sneezed at... The musical life of Orange has been transformed. The

respondent’s family, whether paid or unpaid, at least once during the sample year. See Figures 6 and 7.

cost? The combined cash subsidy coming from the three levels of government for the core operations of all the Orange Music Association *and* Orange Symphony Orchestra programs is about \$38,000. Local government also supplies some services.'

'Ten years ago in the Dandenong Ranges east of Melbourne there was hardly any community music making at all... Bev McAlister decided to do something about it. The Dandenong Ranges Music Council was born. This Council works in quite subtle ways to encourage people in the community to set up music programs. Ten years later, there are almost 50 of these programs: choirs, jazz orchestras, music theatre groups, symphony orchestras, African drumming, ethnic music groups etc; a women's music network; a special music program for the disabled, instrumental music lessons. All ages are involved.... The combined cash subsidy from the three levels of government for the core operating costs of the program is about \$27,000!' (Music Council of Australia, submission 59 p679-680)

1.96 Examples like this show that 'the view that the arts are not integral to the Great Australian Way of Life' is a *wrong* view. Australia has not only a healthy professional scene, relative to population, in what some would call 'élite' arts, but also large numbers of people involved in amateur creative life. These people show that the stereotype of the 'uninterested Australian' is a myth, a myth comparable to the myth of the ignorant ocker which is so flatly refuted by the fact that Australians have been among the world's greatest consumers of books and newspapers for many years.

1.97 Government policy must affirm the importance of community cultural life beside professional arts -

'It is essential that the Commonwealth work with those structures and agents which can best plan for cultural change on a regional basis, to listen to what they want, to trust them enough to devolve money to them, and to let them make their own informed decisions.' (Arts Council NSW Ltd, submission 81 p958)

'Community cultural programs are themselves concerned with trying to do something about the alienation, in modern societies, between art and life - an alienation in which art has stopped being something you do or engage with, and becomes instead something you are given and 'consume'... Community cultural programs can offer meaning to the unemployed or to isolated ethnic communities - indeed to anyone. If people can develop their own values and cultures and put them on show, they increase both their own self-esteem and esteem from others. And in a prosperous world in which, for those who have eyes to see, there is no relief from unemployment by orthodox means, programs for increasing cultural amenities may be more relevant than economic indicators - because they point in a different direction. Such programs.... are a reminder that our wellbeing is not something that only money can buy. It is also something that comes from how we live.' (Mr Donald Horne, *Sydney Morning Herald*, 15 March 1995 p16)

Solutions?

1.98 Widespread views, even if mistaken, are not changed by committee recommendations or government *fiat*.³¹ Arts educators must hope for a generation-long process of evolutionary change. Enlightened leadership from society's opinion-formers is important; grassroots support is also important; the two advance hand in hand. The recommendations made in this report are practical matters where administrative action can help.

1.99 Submissions said that, as a practical matter, arts educators need to be better advocates. The broader arts community also has a critical role, because it is mostly they who are the public face of the arts (ordinary people get on with their creative hobbies, or attend adult education 'leisure and enrichment' courses, in their millions, but these activities are practically invisible in the media and in government policy). Yet the interests and outlook of the two groups are not necessarily the same. Some of the differences were subtly apparent in the submissions to this inquiry. Education people tended to focus on the process of learning - the enrichment of the many. Arts people tended to focus on skills, excellence, creative products - the talent of the few.

1.100 For 'the arts community', recognition as a specialist is flattering. Probably many arts people, whether consciously or not, are willing enough to be seen as 'different' - to assume the mantle of a priestly caste which carries out the activity of 'being creative' on behalf of the community. This is regrettable. It encourages the perception that the arts are divorced from everyday life. It encourages the idea that the artist's vocation is distinctly different from the teacher's - an attitude that has practical disbenefits for arts education, mentioned at paragraph 2.85.

1.101 The Committee suggests that it is crucial to change this view of art. Professionalism and excellence in the arts are good; but this does not mean that the arts should be *limited* to the professional and excellent. The negative attitudes which influence the particular educational problems detailed in the rest of this report will change only in proportion as artistic and creative life is fully integrated into everyday life. If ordinary people are to feel that their own creativity is of the same kind as the specialist's creativity, the arts community must feel it too. Participating in artistic and creative activities one way or another, whether highly or humbly, should be regarded not as exceptional, but as normal. Only then will arts education have an integrated place in the education of the whole person.

31 We suspect that this is why several major official reports on arts education over the last twenty years do not seem to have changed much. One witness commented, 'We've been nibbling around the edges of this for 30 to 40 years.' (private briefing for the Committee, 29 May 1995).

Arts enrolments at school and uni: the status quo

*Growing elective arts enrolments*³²

1.102 Many arts educators felt that their problems of lack of status and resources were compounded by what they described as the fast growth of elective arts subjects in secondary schools in recent years. In detail the evidence on this was rather unclear, particularly for the years below year 11.

1.103 The situation is complicated by large differences between the States and Territories. For example, around the country many similar subjects are offered by different names, complicating the task of gathering comparable statistics. In a devolved system individual schools may offer unique school-based subjects, or may fill in statistical forms in different ways according to their judgment of doubtful cases. These complications tend to be greater for Years 10 and below, since in Years 11-12 more uniformity is imposed by the various senior secondary accreditation authorities.

1.104 In light of these difficulties the Committee made no attempt to gather comprehensive baseline statistics on the state of arts offerings in the curriculum since, even if they were available, to interpret them properly would be a research project far beyond the Committee's resources. APPENDIX 6 contains a fairly random collection of relevant statistics offered in the submissions or discovered in the Committee's very limited further inquiries among State education authorities. They are presented exactly as found, with no attempt to complete, correlate, explain or analyse. The difficulty of drawing general conclusions from such partial information will be obvious. More comment on the difficulties is in APPENDIX 6.

Year 11 and 12 enrolments

1.105 Australia-wide, arts enrolments as a proportions of total enrolments in Year 12 elective subjects have grown noticeably from 1985 to 1993. Total Year 12 enrolments have grown by 60 per cent in the period. Enrolments in Visual Arts and Music - the traditional big two arts subjects - have roughly kept pace with this (58 per cent and 53 per cent increase respectively). The 'newer' arts subjects - Drama, Dance, Media - have seen large increases - 340 per cent increase for 'performing arts' and 489 per cent increase for 'other visual/performing arts' (to use the terms of

32 Two common statistics in education that need to be clearly distinguished are *subject enrolments* and *students' participation*. *Enrolments* counts each student's enrolment in each subject s/he studies; therefore, total enrolments consists of the number of students multiplied by the average number of subjects studied per student. Enrolments in a subject area, as a percentage of all enrolments, is a *guide* to the relative popularity of that subject area, but says nothing about whether many students are taking one subject from that area, or fewer students are taking more than one. *Participation* figures show (for example) how many students are taking *at least* one subject from a subject area, as a percentage of all students. Both enrolments and participation in a subject area need to be seen in context of the number of subjects students commonly take, particularly when making interstate comparisons. For example, in a five-subject Year 12 system a compulsory subject has 20 per of total enrolments; in a six-subject Year 12 system a compulsory subject has only 16.7 per cent of total enrolments. See also Figure 8.

Department of Employment, Education and Training statistics). ‘Textiles/design’ has fallen back, relatively, with only a 27 per cent increase over the period. However, because the large percentage increases for the newer arts subjects have been from very small bases, the total numbers in arts continue to be dominated by Visual Arts with about half total Year 12 arts enrolments. Music used to have unchallenged second place, with a third as many enrolments as Visual Arts and three times as many as any smaller arts subject; it is now being overtaken by the performing arts. In 1993, 24 per cent of Year 12 students took at least one arts subject. See Figure 9.³³

1.106 The ‘massive increases’ claimed in many submissions, though true for the newer arts offerings, should not be overstated as a generality. Australia-wide, arts enrolments as a percentage of total Year 12 tertiary accredited enrolments have increased from 4.5 per cent in 1985 to 5.4 per cent in 1989 and 5.7 per cent in 1993 - a 27 per cent growth over and above the growth that would have maintained their position.³⁴ Visual Arts and Music enrolments, as a proportion of total Year 12 enrolments, have fallen back slightly (no doubt this is at least partly because of the wider range of arts subjects now on offer). The *National Report on Schooling in Australia* describes the 1989-93 trend as ‘small increases in the arts’.³⁵ See Figure 9.

1.107 Average figures conceal significant differences between the States. For example, in **Victoria** between 1984 and 1993 arts enrolments increased from 4.2 per cent to 8.8 per cent of total Year 12 enrolments, the most marked increase being since 1991.³⁶ On the other hand, in **Queensland** from 1989 to 1994 from 1989 to 1994 Year 12 arts enrolments increased only slightly, from 8.4 per cent to 8.9 per cent of total Year 12 enrolments.³⁷ Figure 10 shows 1993 Year 12 arts enrolments, and students taking arts ‘courses’, as a proportion of the total enrolments and total students respectively, in each State and Territory (an arts ‘course’ is a combination of subjects defined according to certain criteria, of which the main one is that it includes at least two arts subjects). The differences are so marked (from 10 per cent of Western Australian students taking an arts-based course to 0.6 per cent of Northern Territory students) that it suggests some anomaly in the data or definitions; but even

33 Department of Employment, Education and Training, submission 130 pp1614-1615. From 1985 to 1993 Year 12 music enrolments grew more slowly than any other arts subject except textiles/design (see Figure 9). Several submissions commented that music teaching is dominated by classical instruments and repertoire and is out of touch with contemporary music. Could these facts be related? ‘Secondary school students are voting with their feet when it comes to music’ (Mr Geoff Walden, submission 95 p1103). On the other hand, AUSMUSIC comments: ‘The stranglehold that traditional music has had over music education is gradually being eroded thanks to the National Training Agenda and AUSMUSIC’s efforts.’ AUSMUSIC, submission 75 p785.

34 Department of Employment, Education and Training, submission 130 p1614.

35 Ministerial Council on Employment, Education and Training, *National Report on Schooling in Australia*, 1993, p6.

36 Cross Arts Victoria and others, submission 96 p1129. See also APPENDIX 6. Figure 10 below puts 1993 Victorian Year 12 arts enrolments at 7.3 per cent of total Victorian Year 12 enrolments.

37 See APPENDIX 6.

disregarding these two outliers participation in arts courses varies from 3.2 per cent of Year 12 students in New South Wales to 7.2 per cent in Queensland.³⁸

1.108 Such differences presumably reflect mostly differences in the States' offering rather than differences between the nature of children in different States. For example, Year 12 drama is offered by half the high schools of Queensland and Western Australia, and only a fifth of the high schools of New South Wales and Victoria; Year 12 music is taught in two thirds of the high schools of Queensland and only one third of the high schools of Western Australia.³⁹ The existence of latent demand where offerings are poor is suggested by the survey finding that arts subjects are prominent among those which students report they would like to take but cannot, either because they are not offered or because of timetable clashes.⁴⁰ Interstate comparisons will also be affected by the number of subjects students take since, in a state where students commonly take more subjects, participation and enrolments in any one of them will naturally be lower.⁴¹

1.109 The recent study by the Australian Council of Educational Research *Subject Choice in Years 11 and 12*, which is the source for Figure 10, also breaks down Year 12 arts enrolment and students' participation in arts 'courses (1993) by other characteristics of the enrolled students, such as gender and ethnicity.⁴² Apart from the striking differences between States just mentioned, the main results are:

- As is often remarked, the arts are taken disproportionately by girls, though this bias is gradually decreasing. The extent of this bias differs markedly among the artforms - for example, from 88 per cent girls in dance to 33 per cent girls in graphic communications in Victoria, 1993. See Figure 9 and APPENDIX 6.
- Participation is fairly constant across the socio-economic groups. This contradicts the anecdotal view (of some) that the arts tend to be taken by better-off students who, it is said, do not have to worry so much about getting a job after Year 12. Possibly this tendency, if it is true, is counterbalanced by the reported tendency for the arts to be taken by the less academic students.⁴³
- Participation is significantly lower among those not of English-speaking background.

38 J Ainley and others, *Subject Choice in Years 11 and 12*, Department of Employment, Education and Training and Australian Council of Educational Research, 1994, pp23,87,105.

39 *ibid*, p158.

40 *ibid*, p153.

41 In a five-subject Year 12 system a compulsory subject will have 20 per cent of total enrolments; in a six-subject system, only 16.7 per cent. The average numbers of full year equivalent Year 12 subjects studied in the various states (1993) are: NSW 5.9; Vic 5.0; Qld 6.1; SA 4.9; WA 6.0; Tas 4.2; ACT 4.7; NT 4.9; Australia 5.6. J Ainley and others, *Subject Choice in Years 11 and 12*, Department of Employment, Education and Training & Australian Council of Educational Research, 1994, p63.

42 *ibid*.

43 This comment of course assumes a correlation - admittedly debatable - between low socio-economic background and 'less academic'.

- Participation is significantly higher among Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students.
- There is a positive correlation between participation in the arts and low early school achievement in numeracy, and a less strong correlation with low early school achievement in literacy.
- Participation is low in Catholic and independent schools compared with government schools. This again tends to contradict the anecdotal view (of some) that elective arts students tend to be the more privileged students.⁴⁴ It seems inconsistent with the survey finding that on average in Catholic systemic secondary schools in Victoria arts has about 15 per cent of the teaching time (see paragraph 3.7).
- There is little variation in participation between city and country. This appears to contradict the anecdotal view that country schools are relatively disadvantaged in the arts. On the other hand, the survey found that while almost all schools offer at least one subject from at least seven Key Learning Areas,⁴⁵ smaller schools are less likely to offer more than one. So if students in smaller schools are relatively deprived, it is probably not so much that they are denied *any* art, but that they are denied a *choice* of arts.⁴⁶

1.110 See Figure 10.

1.111 Why have arts enrolments been increasing their share of total senior secondary enrolments? Cross Arts Victoria suggests -

‘The massive increase in senior secondary arts enrolments suggest to us that arts education caters for needs not met elsewhere in the curriculum for many students who in years past would not have stayed at school.’ (Cross Arts Victoria and others, submission 96 p1132)

1.112 By contrast, the same submission, observing that in most arts subjects Victorian Year 12 enrolments peaked in 1992 and declined slightly in 1993, offers this possible explanation: ‘It may be that in a time of economic recession students chose subjects which were more immediately job-related.... however, no firm data are to hand on this issue.’⁴⁷

44 This comment of course assumes a correlation - admittedly debatable - between Catholic/independent school students and ‘more privileged’.

45 The eight Key Learning Areas defined are those of the National Curriculum (discussed from paragraph 3.59): English, maths, science, technology, studies of society and environment, languages other than English, health and physical education, and the arts. Among schools that do not offer at least one subject from each Key Learning Area, the first Key Learning Area to drop out is most commonly languages other than English.

46 J Ainley and others, *Subject Choice in Years 11 and 12*, Department of Employment, Education and Training & Australian Council of Educational Research, 1994, pp166-168. The study distinguished capital cities, other cities over 25,000 population, and other places.

47 Cross Arts Victoria and others, submission 96 p1129.

Enrolments in years below Year 11

1.113 The situation in Years 7-10 is much less clear. The focus of statistical reporting in education seems to be on Years 11 and 12, presumably as a result of the stronger public interest and policy interest in Year 12 education as the gateway to university or vocational training. As well, below Year 11 the uniformity imposed by the various senior secondary accreditation boards is less present.⁴⁸

1.114 Submissions to the inquiry gave no statistical overview, either of trends over time or of the progress of an average cohort. As examples only, in **New South Wales** (1992) 25.7 per cent of Year 10 students studied Visual Arts; 11 per cent Music; 8 per cent Drama; and 1.4 per cent Dance.⁴⁹ In **Victoria** 47.4 per cent of Year 10 students (1994) take visual arts, 31.5 per cent graphic communication, 22.2 per cent drama, 12.4 per cent music, 11.6 per cent media, and 1.3 per cent dance.⁵⁰ The difference between Year 10 participation in Visual Arts in New South Wales and Victoria is striking. In **Western Australia** (1992) 12.8 per cent of Year 10 enrolments in government schools were arts enrolments.⁵¹

1.115 The balance between provision of arts as core subjects and as elective offerings as students progress through Years 7-10 - which may be concealed by total figures such as those in the last paragraph - is an important matter on which the Committee has practically no information. The one piece of evidence submitted sampled the shifting balance from compulsory subjects to elective offerings over Years 7-10 in Victoria.⁵² It showed, as would be expected, a strong dominance of compulsory classes in Year 7 moving towards a strong dominance of elective classes in Year 10. See APPENDIX 6.

1.116 The time allocated to arts in schools, as distinct from the number of students enrolled, is very uncertain. Chapter 3 comments on this further.

*University arts enrolments*⁵³

1.117 At university level, between 1989 and 1994 arts enrolments increased by 45 per cent; this was somewhat faster than total enrolments (30 per cent increase), and as a result arts enrolments increased from 3.41 per cent to 3.65 per cent of total university enrolments over the period. The university figures conceal widely differing results for different artforms, varying from 185 per cent increase in Film and

48 The Schools Council of the National Board of Employment, Education and Training has recognised the relative neglect of the middle years of schooling, by comparison with initiatives relating to Years 11-12 in the last decade, with its Compulsory Years of Schooling project (1991-93). This project produced eight discussion papers and reports, culminating with *Five to Fifteen - Reviewing the 'Compulsory' Years of Schooling*, 1993.

49 Government of New South Wales, submission 78 p824.

50 Cross Arts Victoria and others, submission 96 p1121.

51 WA Ministry of Education, *Annual Report 1992-93*, p24.

52 Cross Arts Victoria and others, submission 96 p1120.

53 Readers are reminded that in this report 'arts' mean things like dance, drama, music, visual arts and crafts. It does *not* mean humanities generally.

Photographic Arts enrolments to 5 per cent decrease in Crafts enrolments over the period.⁵⁴ See Figure 12.

Uni. entrance and Year 12 subject choice

1.118 Several submissions claimed that university entrance arrangements influence students' subject choices in Years 11-12 detrimentally to the arts.

1.119 School leavers' entry to competitive university faculties is chiefly determined by a 'tertiary entrance rank' ('tertiary entrance score' in some states). The tertiary entrance rank is a single figure which supposedly summarises a student's Year 11-12 performance, and has the signal merit for administrators that it makes it possible easily to put all students in the state in a single order of merit ('tertiary entrance rank') for the purpose of allocating university places. The figure is derived from a student's raw marks in tertiary-accredited subjects using rather complicated mathematical manipulations ('scaling') that are intended to compensate for differences in marking between different subjects and (where marks are given independently within schools) between different schools. Details differ from state to state. Universities may also dictate prerequisite studies or assumed knowledge for entry to certain faculties.

1.120 The concern expressed to the Committee is that -

'Students who wish to get into [tertiary] courses of their choice which have a high entry cut-off are often dissuaded from taking art in their final year [at school] since there is widespread belief in the community that it is difficult to achieve a score at the upper end of the spectrum comparable to some other subjects. Such a belief whether justified or not has, from our point of view, an undesirable effect.' (Prof. Judith Brine, submission 44 p515)

'The scaling procedure is based upon the equal achievement principle which states that 'the same group of students in two subject areas should, as a group, be expected to show the same overall achievement in both subjects.' Students are awarded a subject achievement score and a scaled score for each subject studied. In the Arts... subjects are frequently scaled down and the difference between the two scores is quite significant. The difference is a major influence in decisions made by students about the subjects they should choose to maximise aggregate scores. It has been argued that this works against ensuring that students make choices on educational and interest grounds.' (Government of South Australia, submission 109 p1306)

1.121 The fact that marks in arts tend to be scaled down is widely seen as 'unfair' - implying that the scaling system is flawed. In the contrary view the scaling system is valid - the scaled-down marks show that the arts really *are* 'soft' subjects (that is, marked relatively generously), taken disproportionately by less able students -

54 Department of Employment, Education and Training, submission 130 p1635-36 and supplementary information.

‘Today the statistical methods used to scale students’ results in the various subjects across the secondary school curriculum provide clear evidence of such a flight of talent from the art class.... The popular notion that artistic ability and academic ability are mutually exclusive, yet equally valuable, is little more than a defensive rationalization put about by art teachers in response to the low status of their subject.’ (Dr Alan Lee, attachment to submission 46)

1.122 Whatever the truth of this, the *perception* that the arts are not the way to a high mark has regrettable knock-on effects -

‘A ‘ripple’ effect may be observed where students choose subjects other than Arts subjects in an attempt to maximise their chances of university entrance. As a result, the viability of senior secondary Art subjects may be threatened within schools because insufficient numbers of students opt to study them. This is particularly the case in small schools and/or country schools. This means that students who have no intention of applying for university entrance may be denied the opportunity of studying Arts subjects in school. The resulting decrease in enrolments in senior secondary Arts subjects in turn affects the enrolment in junior secondary Arts classes, and eventually the subject may not be offered at all within the school.’ (Government of South Australia, submission 109 p1306)

1.123 This issue is not about entrance to the specialist art schools and conservatoriums (which tend to have special entry requirements involving portfolios and interviews), but rather about how the standard university entrance procedures, it is claimed, influence opportunities and choices *in school* among the many who will *not* go on to art school but may still have benefited from an arts course in secondary school.

1.124 The use of tertiary entrance ranks and the way that influences the senior school curriculum is an issue that goes far beyond the particular problems of the arts -

‘Universities continue to rely overwhelmingly on selection of Year 12 graduates by score or tertiary entrance ranking. This approach assumes that the aptitudes and abilities of increasingly diverse bodies of students can be meaningfully reduced to a single dimension on which they can be compared. The curriculum tends to be constrained accordingly. Those subjects, such as mathematics, which are held to have the greatest discriminating or predictive value enjoy more prestige and attract more students. Other areas of the curriculum - notably the arts, humanities, vocational subjects and personal development subjects - enjoy less prestige and do not attract the mix of students warranted by their importance as fields of knowledge.’ (Schools Council [of National Board of Employment, Education and Training], *The Role of Schools in the Vocational Preparation of Australia’s Senior Secondary Students: Final Report*, December 1994, p3)

1.125 It is also said, for example, that students wanting to enter highly competitive Law feel constrained to study maths and science in order to get the highest marks, even though maths and science might be quite inappropriate as prerequisites for Law.

‘While the attempt has been to keep the innumerate out of Engineering, the effect has been to let the illiterate into Medicine and Law.’ (Lucy Sullivan, ‘Matriculation and University Admission: A Quagmire’, *Education Monitor*, summer 1993-94, p16)

1.126 In reply it is said that if there is a problem it is up to Law faculties (for example) to set appropriate humanities prerequisites: it is not the fault of the scaling system.

1.127 These are complex and hotly debated issues, which the Committee certainly cannot pass judgment on here. The debate is made the more difficult because it involves quite complicated mathematics in the scaling and ranking procedures. We make only a few points -

- If there is a *perception* that the arts are a handicap to university entrance, this is itself a serious fact, *whether or not the perception is true*. If the perception encourages brighter or more ambitious students to shun the arts, it is likely to become a self-fulfilling prophecy, to the detriment of a broad education for those students, and to the detriment of our cultural life generally as the more talented choose other futures. The arts and humanities will not receive the attention warranted by their importance as fields of knowledge.
- When we say ‘brighter students tend to choose maths’ (for example) we must remember that the definition of ‘bright’ is culturally determined. We must guard against defining ‘bright’ as simply ‘those who did well in maths in earlier years’ since, by that definition, the fact that these students are more likely to choose maths in later years is only to be expected. In this regard the Committee notes that the ‘early school achievement; measured in the Australian Council for Educational Research’s *Youth in Transition* longitudinal survey project measures only literacy and numeracy. The Committee recommends below (paragraph 3.12) that educational outcomes should be surveyed for all Key Learning Areas, not only literacy and numeracy.
- Any problems with the tertiary entrance ranking system are likely to become more severe as Year 12 retention increases, competition for university places increases, and the profile of Year 12 students and curriculum diversifies, making a *single* tertiary entrance score less and less appropriate as a guide to students’ abilities or achievements.

1.128 The recent report *Subject Choice in Years 11 and 12*⁵⁵ surveyed students reasons for choosing their Year 12 subjects, prompting with 17 possible answers. Overall it found that reasons like ‘to get good marks’ were fairly unimportant compared with reasons relating to interest and enjoyment. This may seem to contradict the perception that student’s choices are constrained by the competition for tertiary entrance ranks to a worrying degree.

55 J Ainley and others, *Subject Choice in Years 11 and 12*, Department of Employment, Education and Training & Australian Council of Educational Research, 1994

1.129 On the other hand, there is some ambiguity in the result: although only two of the prompts (yielding 5.2 per cent of all answers) mentioned ‘tertiary entrance’, four others covered possible similar concepts, the six yielding 43.3 per cent of all answers (compared with 29 per cent for the ‘interest and enjoyment’ answers).⁵⁶

1.130 Furthermore, the sum of all answers is not particularly relevant if the concern is about students’ different behaviour in the different subject areas. In this regard the study confirms the popular perception: there is a strong tendency for students taking maths and physical sciences to do so primarily for the marks, not for interest or enjoyment; and there is a strong tendency for students taking arts (equalled only by physical education) to do so primarily for interest and enjoyment, not for the marks.⁵⁷ In this regard maths and physical sciences as a pair contrast strongly with all other subjects. See Figure 11 below.

1.131 Presumably few of those who take maths or sciences are going to become mathematicians or scientists. The result leaves open the concern that such a wide gulf in perceptions of maths and science versus other subjects is an unhealthy situation, which may be detrimental to the broad education of the maths and science students and detrimental to the status of humanities and arts as fields of knowledge. The Committee considers that this is a matter worthy of further investigation.

Recommendation 1

The Commonwealth, in consultation with the Australian Vice-Chancellor’s Committee and State education authorities, should review the influence of university entrance arrangements on the school curriculum to discover whether they are having a detrimental effect on humanities and arts.

Paradoxes in the status quo

1.132 How to summarise the status quo? In the last decade new arts electives have been offered in more schools, and elective arts enrolments as a proportion of total enrolments have increased noticeably, if not ‘massively’, at school and university. On the other hand, arts educators complain of cutbacks, and seem to feel their second class status in the school system as acutely as ever. This seems paradoxical.

56 *ibid*, p144. The 17 prompts include ‘relevant to the work I want to do in the future’; ‘necessary for studies after leaving school’; ‘find subject useful and practical’; ‘one in which I usually get good marks’; ‘helps get good tertiary entrance score’; ‘marks used in tertiary entrance selection’. Respondents were asked to give the *main* reason for their choice in respect of each subject they were enrolled in. See Figure 11 below.

57 *ibid*, p147. We say ‘primarily’ advisedly. Because the survey only allowed one answer for each subject - the *main* reason for choosing it - the extent to which those who chose maths or science mainly for the marks *also* liked or disliked maths or science is not revealed.

1.133 Part of the explanation probably lies in the subtle differences between the ‘arts’ focus and the ‘education’ focus, alluded to above (paragraphs 1.50 and 1.99). It is quite possible that simultaneously new electives are opening up quality options for a few students in a few schools, while the core classes of the many - particularly in primary school - are relatively neglected.

1.134 Part of the explanation probably lies in the various broader trends in education which arts educators foresee having detrimental side-effects for them - such as global budgeting and other devolution of decision-making to schools; reductions in primary specialists; declining centralised curriculum support. These matters are considered further in later chapters.

1.135 Part of the explanation probably lies in society’s paradoxical and ambivalent attitudes to the arts generally -

‘Arts education seems to be going through a cycle of making gains, that is acceptance within the school system and then having to fight for its very survival. This is reflected in ‘art’ areas initially being left off National curriculum statements in a number of countries, most notably Australia and the six national goals for education [in] America 2000.... [This cycle] also reflects the dichotomy which exists about the arts, that is the perception that exists where the arts are seen to be peripheral, expendable and at the very least, not worthy contenders for priority in education, and also an awareness of the powerful possibilities of learning through the arts.’ (Ms Trish Meyer, submission 112 p1332)

1.136 Part of the explanation probably lies in the *instability* of the arts’ status at - or near - the bottom of the pecking order, and the anxiety this arouses -

‘Our data appear to describe an excellent situation in the recent past which may be about to decline. There are several reasons for believing this to be true. One is the decline in specialist programs in primary schools and in enrolment in the less directly vocationally-related areas at senior levels. The rise of the necessity for ‘user pays’ arrangements for involvement in anything but basic classroom education is another. The reasons appear more, however, in comments which were made, most precisely encapsulated in a comment from a primary school principal: “We believe that what we had was outstanding. All students were involved in a very strongly supported arts program. We have cut that back by half this year and next year it will need to be cut back further... I think we will be back to basics very shortly, and ‘basics’ in this case are very basic indeed...”

Trends in education follow those in society more generally except more slowly. The recession may be about to hit school education and the notion of first rate arts education as an unaffordable luxury appears to be more evident. This is one of the principal concerns of arts education: how to maintain consistency of resourcing and offering over longer term periods. Perhaps more than any other area of the curriculum the arts are subject to significant fluctuations in public, systemic and institutional support. (Cross Arts Victoria and others, submission 96 p1131)

1.137 The Committee has been conscious of the need to remember that other disciplines also have their problems in the education system, particularly in the light of the major cuts to some States' education budgets in recent years. Few witnesses grappled with questions of how important their problems are compared with other people's problems, how their demands should be accommodated within a limited total budget, or how, in principle, a *balanced* school curriculum is decided. We did not hear what science teachers or geography teachers would think of giving more time to arts.

1.138 In this light, we speak of the arts' status 'at *or near* the bottom of the pecking order' advisedly. The 'status' problems described here are not unique to the arts. Similar problems were described to this Committee's 1992 inquiry into physical education.⁵⁸ Science in primary schools is an acknowledged problem area.⁵⁹ The last quote above, focussing on recent cuts to primary arts in Victoria, must be balanced against the finding that cuts the Victoria's education budget have affected primary specialist programs generally: among the cuts arts (taking music and craft together) are most prominent, but physical education follows closely and several other areas are also important.⁶⁰

1.139 Mindful of this, the Committee has been reluctant to make recommendations that might be interpreted as 'special favours for the arts'. An underlying theme of this report is the way broader reforms to education have influenced (or, it is feared, may influence) the arts by way of unintended side-effects or 'collateral damage'. An underlying theme in the recommendations is the need to pre-empt, monitor and remedy the detrimental side-effects of change wherever they occur - not only in the arts. In so doing we may hope that if a change is doing the arts collateral damage, the remedy will give the arts - and perhaps other disciplines with similar problems - a collateral benefit.

58 '... physical education is being dramatically reduced throughout schools in Australia and there is a lack of political commitment to address the problems associated with the provision of quality physical education. Ironically, there is no dispute about the importance of physical education, yet there is a serious problem with its delivery.' Senate Standing Committee on Environment, Recreation and the Arts, *Physical and Sport Education*, Canberra 1992, p xiii.

59 See paragraph 2.52, footnote.

60 'About 70 per cent of primary schools [surveyed] have reduced their specialist programs. Largest losses have occurred in the areas of music, sport/PE, art/craft/ languages other than English, English as a second language, remediation, library and computers.' D. McRae, *Into the Bone - the Impact of Cuts to Victorian Government School Education 1993-94*, 1994, pp9,20. In a more recent survey with a bigger sample (465 out of Victoria's 1284 primary schools), 297 schools reported reductions of some sort in specialist classes; 154 (33%) report reductions in physical education/sport, 130 (28%) in art/craft, 119 (26%) in music, 96 (21%) in library, 58 (13%) in computer education, and 44 (9.5%) in languages other than English (many responses were multiple). Of course, to interpret such figures one needs to consider the extent of the cuts referred to in each response and the character of the previous status quo from which the cuts are made. D. McRae, *Victorian Primary Principals Workload Study*, unpublished data 1995.

Need to monitor disciplines, not only institutions

1.140 In particular, there is a need to monitor the state of education not only by *institutions* - considering each school or university as a unit - but also by *discipline*. The first focuses on administrative arrangements; the second on the right balance of subjects and the right mixture of learning - which is, surely, the more important thing. A focus only on institutions may mean that issues to do with particular disciplines, which may not show up in system-wide statistics, tend to be overlooked. But if there are factors - whether administrative arrangements or deeper attitudes - that influence many institutions similarly, and if these things cause widespread systematic disadvantages to particular disciplines, this is an important thing to know and may have important effects on the equity and diversity of the education system.⁶¹

1.141 As one witness commented -

‘Is it too much to expect that when governments determine new policies, like the 1987 Unified National System [of universities], the cracks through which we are likely to fall could be shored up? That has never really happened.’ (Prof. David Williams, Australian Council of University Art and Design Schools, at a private briefing for the Committee, 29 May 1995)

Creative thinking in mathematics: Answer to the problem at paragraph 1.46

*The numbers from 1 to 100 can be re-ordered in pairs:
1+100=101; 2+99=101; 3+98=101.... 50+51=101. There are 50
such pairs, so the sum of the numbers 1 to 100 is 50x101 = 5050.*

61 In the case of universities, in the late 1980s the Department of Employment, Education and Training carried out a number of ‘discipline reviews’ - law (1987), engineering (1988), teacher education in maths and science (1989), accounting (1990), agricultural and related studies (1990), and computer information/science (1991). In 1991 the National Board of Employment, Education and Training and its Higher Education Council advised: ‘... there are at present no obvious further areas, including Government priority areas, which would justify the detailed examination involved in current discipline reviews and there is no significant professional or political pressure for any further such reviews... The Council therefore recommends that the discipline review program in its present form be discontinued and replaced by more focussed, objective reviews...’ The Government replaced discipline reviews with a variety of quality assurance initiatives - not discipline-specific - under the aegis of a new Committee for Quality Assurance in Higher Education. These arrangements are now under review. Recommendation 3 below (paragraph 2.65) is relevant. Dawkins, the Hon. J, *The Future of Discipline Assessments: report of the National Board of Employment, Education and Training and its Higher Education Council*, Canberra, April 1991; Department of Employment, Education and Training, *Annual Report 1993-94*.