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The hidden topography of Australia's arts nation: The contribution of universities to the artistic landscape (AUR 58 01)

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Abstract

In *Arts Nation 2015*, the Australia Council documented the current landscape of artistic endeavour in Australia, acknowledging that there are still gaps that need to be filled to build a greater public understanding of the arts in Australia. The contribution of Australian universities to the arts is one such lacuna. This paper seeks to expand this understanding by considering the contribution that the university sector makes to visual and performing arts outside its traditional teaching role. It draws upon data contained in university websites and through interviews with practising artists employed as academic staff in three case study universities. It explores how and why these contributions remain largely hidden in reports on artistic endeavour and concludes by suggesting that a greater recognition of the role that universities play in Australia's *Arts Nation* will deliver benefits to artists, audiences and to Australia's artistic and cultural heritage.

Keywords: arts, research management, Arts Nation

Introduction

The Australia Council's 2015 *Arts Nation* report provides a national picture of the economic and cohesive contribution that the visual and performing arts are making to Australian society (Australia Council, 2015). Noting the connection between tertiary education and artistic engagement, the report highlights: that younger Australians are 'more likely to create art' when linked to school or tertiary education (Australia Council, 2015, p. 11); that 'people with a university degree' are more likely to attend arts events (Australia Council, 2015, p. 15); and that over 100,000 students are currently undertaking tertiary level creative arts programs. For anyone who works or studies in one of Australia's universities; who has attended a performance or an exhibition in the University art gallery; or is familiar with the current categorisation of non-traditional research outputs (ARC, 2012a), this

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portrayal of university arts will appear incomplete. Although Australian universities shape artistic understanding and talent through their teaching programs, they represent far more to Australia's artistic landscape than just a home for the undeveloped waiting to be enlightened on the appreciation or creation of art. The university sector houses a sizeable component of Australia's artistic infrastructure and current practitioners. It is a core 'player' in the Australian visual and performing art world, but, as the *Arts Nation* report exemplifies, its contribution is largely hidden from public and government comprehension.

Information sources

This paper draws heavily upon digital sources to ensure contemporaneity. Data on university arts infrastructure that is open to the public was gathered by a search of all Australian public university websites, conducted in April 2015. The search terms 'art collection', 'art gallery', 'theatre', 'exhibition and performance space' were supplemented by analysis of visual and performing art schools' web pages, which also provided examples of artistic activities. Finally, the search term 'venues for hire' was used to capture detail that may not have been revealed by other search terms. The data are confined to that which was available on university websites at the time of access and are thus indicative rather than comprehensive. These data are supplemented by face-to-face interviews with 27 practising artists employed as academic staff in three case study universities conducted in 2013 as part of a larger study on artists in the university. Case study universities, selected for a sufficiency of academic staff and the diversity of artistic disciplines, were located in different states and within different university groupings. Interviewees represented a wide range of visual and performing arts genres and career stages. All produce artistic work that is included as research in institutional submissions. Interviewees are identified numerically according to career stage: early career researcher (ECR); mid-career researcher (MCR); and senior career researcher (SCR). Three senior university representatives with responsibility for research management, from institutions other than the case study universities, were also interviewed and their comments are identified numerically using the acronym DVCR.

University contributions to Australia's artistic and cultural landscape

Since the university sector became responsible for the majority of Australia's tertiary arts education in the early 1990s (Dawkins, 1988), every public university in Australia now has some form of creative arts program creating a campus-based interconnected schema of artistic outposts across the country. Universities have become hubs that connect artists with each other, and with their audiences, from Casuarina to Launceston, from Lismore to Perth. The number of artists who work and study in universities is expanded by national and international guest speakers, artists-in-residence and collaborators from art and cultural organisations outside academia. Staff and student work fills the walls of our state and commercial galleries and swells the ranks of Australian orchestras, drama and dance companies. Australian universities host urban and regional art galleries and performance venues, hold some of the most comprehensive collections of art literature and musical scores in specialist libraries and 'are custodians of significant cultural collections and heritage that date back to the mid-19th century' (UAMA, 2009, p. 5).

Art museums, galleries & performance venues

Over twenty universities have specific art museums or galleries, complemented by smaller galleries and public exhibition spaces for staff, student, national and international visitor artwork, located at sites across the country. Performance venues are equally as prolific. Although some schools, notably

Conservatoriums, are profiled as part of city cultural infrastructure, there are over 70 less promoted university theatres and performance spaces for dance, drama and music performances, inside and outside our capital cities. Many host state-of-the-art technical equipment and recording facilities that commercial providers would envy. With the growth of film and multimedia programs, universities also provide cinemas and screening rooms that may open to public access. In addition to traditional galleries and performance venues, universities offer a diversity of permanent and temporary public art experiences, from sculpture and public art walks to outside performance auditoria and settings. Snell (2006) cited 'the opening of new or renovated gallery spaces on university campuses' as 'evidence of a continuing commitment to their mission as custodians and interpreters of our visual culture' (Snell, 2006, p. 3). This commitment appears to be continuing with two institutions expressing an intention to provide new gallery (CQU, 2013) or a more 'conducive' space (Swinburne University, 2015) to house their collections.

Art collections & cultural heritage preservation

Universities are prolific collectors of artworks. 'Their holdings constitute a significant quota of the nation's cultural heritage' (Snell, 2006, p. 4) and investments can be substantial, as the highly publicised dispute between Macquarie University and its former vice-chancellor over its \$12.9 million art collection revealed (Hare, 2012).

Thirty-one Australian universities hold art collections including those who do not offer visual arts teaching programs. Collections feature an array of media: paintings, prints, digital works, ceramics, glass, textiles and sculptures. They represent some of the largest comprehensive collections of specific genres in Australia. La Trobe University, for example, has the largest holding of works by Australian Surrealist Bernard Boles (La Trobe, 2015) and Griffith University has the most significant holding of works produced on paper by Gordon Bennett in Australia (Griffith University, 2015). In performing arts, academic projects preserve local performance culture through, for example, recordings of previously unrecorded musical works (Queensland Conservatorium, Griffith University, 2015) and collections of Australian play scripts (University of New England, 2015). Table 1, provides an indication of the extent of university arts infrastructure that is open to the public through performances and exhibitions.

Table 1: University art collections, visual and performing arts spaces (as at April 2015)

<i>State & University</i>	<i>Visual arts/ Exhibition space</i>	<i>Performing arts space</i>	<i>Art Collection</i>
<i>New South Wales</i>			
Sydney	Sydney College of the Arts Gallery; Callan Park Gallery; Hermann Black Gallery; Tin Sheds Gallery; Sculpture Terrace	The Seymour centre, Verbrugghen Hall; Recital Hall East; Recital Hall West; Choral Assembly Hall; Rex Cramphorn Studio	7000 works
New South Wales	Ivan Dougherty Gallery; Kudos Gallery; Black Box; Art and Design Space; AWESpace II, Three Foot Square; Sculpture Walk	Clancy Auditorium; UNSW Science Theatre; Studio One	1000 works
Newcastle	University Gallery; Senta Taft-Hendry Museum, Watt Space Gallery	Harold Lobb Concert Hall	1000 works
Macquarie	Macquarie University Art Gallery; Macquarie University Sculpture Park	The Dance Studio; Drama and Performance Studio	Yes
Western Sydney	UWS Gallery	Memorial Hall; Playhouse theatre	1000 works
Southern Cross	Studio One29	Concert performance space	
Charles Sturt	HR Gallop Gallery; Access Gallery	Ponton Theatre	Yes
Wollongong	Long Gallery; TAEM Gallery; Digital Media Centre	Performance Space; Backstage Hope	3500 works

UTS	UTS Gallery	Greenhalgh Theatre	Works by 500 artists
New England		A1 theatre	
Victoria			
RMIT	First site Gallery; Design Hub Exhibition Space; Public Space 50; School of Art gallery; RMIT gallery; Project space/ spare room	Keleide Theatre	Yes
Melbourne	Margaret Lawrence Gallery; Ian Potter Museum of Art	Space 28; Studio 45; Grant Street Theatre; Federation Hall; Melba Hall	19000 works
Monash	Monash Museum of Art; MADA Gallery; Ian Potter Sculpture Court	Alexander Theatre; Robert Blackwood Hall; George Jenkins Theatre	1800 works
Deakin	Deakin University Art Gallery;		1600 works
La Trobe	La Trobe University Museum of Art; Gallery one: Visual Arts Centre; Gallery Two: Visual Arts Centre; Phyllis Palmer Gallery	Student Theatre	2000 works
Victoria	The Centre Space; Level 17 Art Space	Kindred Studios	
Federation / Ballarat	Post Office Gallery; Switchback Gallery	Founders Theatre; Helen Macpherson Smith Theatre; Black Box Theatre	yes
Swinburne	n/a	n/a	yes
Queensland			
Queensland	UQ Art Museum	The Nickson Room; Cement Box Theatre	3500 works
Griffith	Webb Gallery; Project Gallery; White Box Gallery	Conservatorium Theatre; Basil Jones Orchestral Hall; Ian Hangar Recital Hall	Yes
QUT	QUT Art Museum; William Robinson Gallery; The Block	The Loft; Gardens Point Theatre	2000 works
James Cook	Emerge Gallery; Lux Gallery	Padua Theatre; Cow Shed Theatre	
Sthn Queensland	USQ Art Gallery	USQ Arts Theatre; USQ Concert Hall	
Central Queensland		QCCM Theatre; Foyer; Dance Floor	600 works
Sunshine Coast	USC gallery		Yes
Western Australia			
Western Australia	Lawrence Wilson Gallery; Lady Sheila Caruthers Gallery; Janet Holmes a Court Gallery	Octagon Theatre; Winthrop Hall; Dolphin Theatre; New Fortune Theatre; Sommerville Auditorium; Sunken Garden	Yes
Edith Cowan	Spectrum Project Space	Geoff Gibbs Theatre; Roundhouse Theatre; Enright Theatre; Music Auditorium	Yes
Curtin	John Curtin Gallery; Sir Lawrence Brodie-Hall Atrium; Access Gallery	Hayman Theatre	Yes
Murdoch	Art Museum Art Gallery;	Nexus Theatre	Yes
South Australia			
Adelaide	Union Gallery	Elder Hall; Hartley Concert Room; Madely Rehearsal Studio; Bishop Hall; The Little Theatre	Yes
South Australia	Anne & Gordon Samstag Museum of Art; SASA Gallery; Exhibition space (Mawson Lakes)	Hartley Playhouse; Auditorium; Drama space (Mawson Lakes);	Yes
Flinders	Flinders University Art Museum; City Gallery	Matthew Flinders Theatre	5500 works
Tasmania			
Tasmania	The Academy Gallery; Plimsoll Gallery	Conservatorium Recital Hall; Annexe Theatre	2500 works
Northern Territory			
Charles Darwin	Charles Darwin University Art Gallery	Charles Darwin Theatre	2000 works

<i>ACU</i>			
Australian National	School of Art Main Gallery, Photospace; Drill Hall Gallery; Foyer Gallery; Sculpture Walk	Arts Centre Main Theatre; Llewellyn Hall; Larry Sitsky Recital Room; Big Band room; Arts centre drama lab	1500 works
Canberra	n/a	n/a	600 works
<i>Multi-state</i>			
Australian Catholic	ACU McGlade Gallery; Peter W Sheehan Gallery; ACU Melbourne Gallery	Recital Room Melbourne	

Community engagement and university outreach

Whether for altruistic reasons or, perhaps in more recent years, to encourage 'the town to vote for the gown' (Davis, 2007, p. 1) the arts has long provided a way for the university to connect with its communities. As one interviewee explained:

There is not much in the university that you can make public. You can't let the public into your laboratories [or] . . . language labs . . . they are closed spaces. Whereas the visual and performing arts, in order to do their stuff, they have got to go public and therefore we are always going out, as entirely natural, to have that external face. (SCR8)

Universities share their art collections through their own gallery exhibitions and through loans to state and regional galleries, however there are a myriad of others ways in which university arts connects with communities. Local performances and exhibitions by students, visiting artists and academic staff are particularly important cultural contributions in regional areas. The Regional Universities Network (RUN) confirms the 'powerful role' of university-based arts 'in building inclusive and resilient communities, increasing awareness and understanding of key societal issues' (RUN, 2013 p. 31). One interviewee agreed:

The university ... interface with the community is incredibly important in Australia, particularly in regions ... that is one of the things about Australia that is unusual ... perhaps it is not research, perhaps it is not teaching, but it is a very particular, valuable, extensive and detailed community service. The interface between the arts and the community. If that wasn't there, the country wouldn't look like that at all. (SCR10)

Another interviewee highlighted the importance of this contribution by comparing Europe where culture is 'very rich and very decentralised' (MCR3) with the situation in regional Australia, noting that: 'if you live in Bordeaux, some great exhibition will come to your town . . . In Australia it may be more critical to have these . . . at tertiary level, simply because we don't have that decentralised culture' (MCR3).

Universities provide sites for local communities to participate in visual and performing arts activities: in community choirs (Newcastle University, 2015); through training and inspirational settings for young artists (Sydney Conservatorium, 2015); and space for gifted local artists (Sydney College of the Arts, 2015). They provide mechanisms to connect communities with their heritage, histories and their sub-cultures, to improve community cohesion and to address particular challenges (Central Queensland University, 2015a).

Universities are active donors and participants in local and State arts organisations, with senior university staff frequently represented on their boards providing expertise (Melbourne Theatre

Company, 2015; Queensland Theatre Company, 2015) and infrastructure support to artistic development at both professional and amateur levels (University of Adelaide, 2015).

Current and future artists

In 2013, according to Australian Government higher education data, there were over 3000 academic staff (full-time equivalent) and over 80,000 students (equivalent full-time student load) within the academic organisational unit (AOU) for Creative Arts (DET, 2013; DET 2014). Although the numbers of practising artists are not quantified, and as will be further discussed, the reliability of data may be open to question, when considered together with the extent of artistic works submitted to the national research assessment exercise: 15,918 submissions in 2010; and 13,708 submissions in 2012 (ARC, 2012b, p. 16); it indicates that practising artists represent a sizeable component of the university community. As *Arts Nation* reports, the numbers of students enrolled in creative arts programs is substantial (Australia Council, 2015) and the growth of arts practice postgraduate programs indicates that universities are producing increasing quantities of artistic work, including by some of the nation's top artists:

You would wonder why a viola player . . . who gets first calls from all the major ensembles around the country . . . would decide to do a . . . doctorate? . . . to philosophically understand her practice better and make a contribution to the art world. (SCR10)

Academic staff and students make up the composition of national performing arts organisations and State orchestras. A senior university administrator, noted that in their university 'about a third of the staff' are performing with the State orchestra and that it 'would not [be] able to continue without these performers' (DVCR3). At another university, 'most of the performing artists that come through here are working in the town, so in a sense the university provides the fundamental cultural workers of the place' (SCR4).

The quality of work being produced by the sector's employed artists is also of a high standard with artistic work included in public and private collections, and showcased internationally and nationally in performances and exhibitions. Twenty-six universities were ranked at world standard or above in creative arts and writing in the 2012 Excellence in Research for Australia (ERA) exercise (ARC 2012c). This is not student work but creative work submitted by academic staff, and these submissions represent a significant undercount of the actual work being produced. Australia's top visual art prize winners include staff and graduates of university art programs. Between 2007 and 2015, twelve of Australia's chosen representatives for the Venice Biennale or winners of the Archibald Prize were graduates of university art programs and, six have worked as academic staff within the Australian university sector (Wilson, 2015; Karen Woodbury Gallery, 2015; Fantauzzo, 2015).

Arts and music schools continue to provide the impetus for cohesion and development in the arts community. As one visual artist explained: 'communities are only generated around artist run galleries and activities. . . there is [the state gallery] but it is not really about real artistic engagement. It is not a community' (MCR1). Through projects and sessional teaching, the university provides temporary employment opportunities for 'professional artists, at a good wage that they won't get out in the industry . . . we have to have the latest practices taught and they need the money' (SCR4). Academic staff in visual and performing arts continue to shape and advocate for their genres through boards, festival and events committees and through the mentorship of emerging artistic leaders within their student cohorts. Universities provide a 'cocoon' (SCR2) for the development of young artists to help them grow 'as independent practitioners themselves after they leave the university' (MCR1).

Artwork and artistic direction

Singerman (1999) noted that the university 'has helped to model and select and enable' a 'certain version of art' (Singerman, 1999, p. 210). Interviewees noted positive and negative aspects of how it continues to shape the art that is produced. The university is open to more experimental work than may be possible in a more commercially-oriented setting, providing opportunities for artists to develop 'ephemeral, installation work that in Australia, you can't really sell' (ECR4) and to perform 'esoteric works without immediate market value' (ECR7). Access to a student body of performers provides artists with the ability to 'explore ideas with the students that I could never have afforded to do if I had had to pay actors' (ECR1) and a site for external 'composers, choreographers and directors [to] come . . . and experiment to some extent' (SCR5). This creates a new, fresh body of work that can take the art form forward:

Most academic artists are trying to discover something new with their art each time. It is a can of worms, but there is a whole host of retirees out there who are churning out art and making a living from it, but they do what they do over and over. (ECR9)

The university focus on newness, informed by the novelty requirement in research, however has its negative connotations. For artistic work to be recognised as part of the research workload, it must exhibit a new contribution to the discipline. For a performing artist, however excellent their performance of a classic score, script or choreographed piece, it is unlikely to be accepted as research and thus is less likely to be institutionally recognised or supported. 'People play with the top orchestras and opera companies in the country. It is front and centre to what they do, but within the institutional framework, it is still not really part of [the] assessment' (SCR6). From the perspective of a high profile classical performer, university insistence to avoid 'anything that has been done before' (MCR6) conflicts with the expansion of public access to art:

if I have premiered some new music and I have claimed it as research, in the bigger scheme of things, is it any less valid when I am just playing concerts and not being 'innovative'? . . . I am still contributing to the cultural life of our nation. (ECR7)

The opacity of artistic contribution

Given the extent of the sector's contribution, why does it remain largely hidden in national reviews such as *Arts Nation*? The reasons may stem from insufficient interest by the university sector in progressing the artistic agenda, which is exacerbated by a paucity of data and insufficient communication between arts, higher education and research policy and the practitioner worlds that are governed by them.

Opacity in the arts world

Artists working within the university may face challenges to participating equally as artists within the professional art worlds. Although the Australia Council has dropped its funding exclusions and grant receipt limits for recipients practising from inside academia, other arts bodies have retained, or indeed are introducing, exclusions that prevent artists whose work is undertaken within a university setting from applying for grants (Arts Queensland, 2015). With few alternative research funding sources, artists seeking support for their practice are presented with the temptation to deny their university connection, placing them potentially in breach of university policies and employment contracts. In

some sections of the arts profession, negative perceptions of artists who practise within academia remain, as:

a hangover from the time when academics were the people that sat around and were the critics of art and wrote books about people just from observing . . . That it is falling away a bit, but . . . you lose some kudos in the arts community. (ECR6)

Certainly many interviewees had, at times, experienced a tension in their dual role as artists and academics: 'there is an assumption that . . . if I am a doctor then I am clearly not an arts practitioner' (ECR6).

Universities are increasingly shaping the external art world, as one senior university manager surmised: 'the next "breed" of artists . . . will be all university trained and it is very hard to imagine someone making it without that background' (DVCR3). Despite university and professional artists being 'embedded in each other's worlds' (MCR7), there are concerns, from inside and outside academia, that the university's increasing role in artistic production may be 'detrimental to the sustainability of the sector' (Commonwealth Government, 2002, p. 61) and that university is shaping the future of art in a way that does not accord with the direction envisaged by artists themselves:

The university plays a really important role in defining our culture, and in the creative arts, the expanse of that has been really diminished within the last 20 years and is continuing to be diminished . . . that will affect . . . what the wider community expects or understands as being legitimate as an art form. (ECR3)

Even senior university administrators acknowledge this risk:

Schools of art and . . . music are feeling more pressure . . . to perform in an ERA based economy . . . It is the changing nature of the world but . . . it is hard to determine whether it actually produces better musicians ultimately. (DVCR3)

Opacity in university and government education and research policy

The challenges that artistic practice faces within the university setting do not stem from a sector-wide devaluing of the importance of arts. Indeed, all three DVCR interviewees confirmed the importance of the arts to the university and its connection with other aspects of society: 'As things become more and more automated, the creative input is going to become even more important for human capital' (DVCR1). The challenges relate more to the environment in which the contemporary university must operate. 'We have been told that [funding] to the humanities will be redirected to medical problems like diabetes and dementia. Frankly, I think this is appalling because for a civilised society we should have a vibrant arts culture' (DVCR2).

For the university, the practising arts disciplines represent just a limited number of many disciplinary groups. Policies and practices that manage the comprehensive university sector are designed to fit all rather than capture specificities, and are strongly influenced by Commonwealth Government policy. Universities replicate government reward and recognition criteria in their internal policies, practices, funding and thinking. In government higher education and research policy, the visual and performing arts are largely ignored.

The research agenda provides some of the most obvious examples of the position of artistic practice within government and university consideration. In the research quality evaluation exercise, for example, even the word 'artistic' is invisible in the category in which artistic outputs are captured, with the term non traditional research outputs being preferred. This is despite the fact that only creative arts work was submitted to this category in the 2010 and 2012 exercises (ARC, 2012a). Artistic work is less able than other work to contribute to the university's research funding. The criteria used to calculate university research block funding are largely focused on text-based scholarly publications and particular categories of research funding for which artistic research is either ineligible or exhibits low success rates. (Wilson, 2011). Competitive grants secured from agencies that support artistic practice are accepted as 'esteem' measures, but not in the higher weighted funding component. The government document that lists the most weighted funding schemes, the Australian Competitive Grants Register, not only excludes Australia Council grants (DET, 2015) but the criteria used to determine accepted funders actively dissuades those that provide support for artistic work from seeking inclusion in the list (DIISRTE, 2013). Visual and performing arts practitioners are the only disciplinary group to be unrepresented by a government funded scholarly academy. Neither does artistic work contribute to university ranking performance. Many of the world's top arts institutions operate outside the university sector and artistic disciplines are not reflected in the international university ranking systems to which universities devote their effort (Trounson, 2010). As one DVCR acknowledged:

it is partly a status thing to have medicine and law but the arts have never been seen more broadly by society or . . . within the university as something that necessarily brings high status upon a university. (DVCR3)

In summary, artistic disciplines are seen to make less contribution to the university's standing or financial bottom line or as interviewees put it: 'Nothing that we do can be counted for HERDC [the Higher Education Research Data Collection]' (MCR1); 'it doesn't bring in the Canberra money' (SCR3). This can affect institutional funding and support for artistic activity, and the extent to which it is profiled to the public.

In academic workload models, the practice time required to maintain levels of professional artistic quality is not recognised and artistic work which is valuable to expanding public access to art, but not captured by definitions of research, is relegated to the lesser category of 'service'. Artists who work within university are conscious that exhibitions and performances are a low priority for the university's senior management. At one university, 'despite invitations to all shows, [there is] no attendance by the university hierarchy' (ECR1), and at another, 'you don't see who you would expect to see at many of the openings' (MCR4). This inattention may be reflected in the university's wider promotion: 'if they have an advertising campaign there are not many examples of creative arts people' (SCR2).

Despite the abundance of artistic activity and infrastructure, the arts are surprisingly hidden in university online promotion. With the exception of high profile conservatoriums and art schools, finding data for this paper required drilling deep into the institutional cyber structure. Depressingly, the search term that elicited the most returns for performance venues was 'venues for hire'. Similarly, many of the public exhibitions and performances that schools and faculties host are hidden within academic program and school activity pages, with advertising dependent upon limited school resources rather than the university marketing department. Not only does this lack of profile reduce public opportunities to attend, it also affects the development of the university's art and artists. Artists need audiences, both critics and public, to hone their skills:

the creative act aborts if there is no creative response ... unviewed paintings, unheard sonatas and unread poems fail to fulfil the criteria of the creative act, for creativity has a social dimension . . . New growth requires a creative response, and the creative response requires a medium of exchange, a market place for the appropriate display of creation. (Risenhoover & Blackburn, 1976, p. 210)

Universities hold extensive art collections yet, the opportunity for public viewing of these works is limited. Outside specific gallery showings, the most common mechanism by which universities offer public access to their collections is cited as through display on university corridor walls and offices. As the university campus becomes increasingly security conscious, opportunities to share these publicly funded or philanthropically donated works decrease. Indeed, there are some instances where collection viewing is limited to appointment only.

Lack of data and policy connectivity

A lack of data hides the university's contribution and engagement, and shades its responsibility to the arts. Despite recommendations in 1998 (Strand, 1998) data on artists practising within the university setting is still not routinely collected. Although the government collects annual statistics on academic staff within academic organisational units (AOUs), there are concerns about the reliability of this university supplied data in relation to creative arts. According to staffing data for 2013 (DET, 2014) four universities did not list any staff in the creative arts AOU. This contrasts with these universities' own websites which declare: a 'strong research focus' on creative and performing arts (CQU, 2015b); supervision in 'practice led research' in music (UWS, 2015); honours and graduate degrees in 'drama performance' in its 'School of Humanities and Creative Arts' (Flinders, 2015) and a 'community of committed scholars, researchers and creative artists' (USQ, 2015). Neither is information on infrastructure or community arts activities collected, despite on-going interest in community engagement and the impact of academic work on society (Group of Eight, 2012). Indeed, although artistic work is accepted as research in ERA, it is relegated to a public service in some quarters (AUCEA, 2008).

The lack of connectivity between the university, research and arts sectors was highlighted in 2014 when the then Attorney-General, and Minister for the Arts, announced that he would ask the Australia Council to develop a policy that denied funding to artists that refused private sponsorship, from any company including, potentially, tobacco companies (Cox 2014). Such a move would place university artists seeking funding for their work in direct contravention of university policies that ban acceptance of such funding. Arts, and artists, in the university appear not to fit fully into the university nor arts policy visions. This reduces the capacity to expand Australia's artistic resources and public access.

Conclusion

Twenty years after the university sector assumed responsibility for tertiary creative arts on a large scale, the number of artists who are practising within this setting, the support they receive or the infrastructure that is provided to hone the quality of the work and present their art to the public, remain unknown. Without such baseline data, how can the true extent of our artistic endeavour be quantified or any certainty be presumed that the structures that support it are contributing to improved artwork and artistic standing? With such a paucity of information, it is understandable that the Australia Council sought to focus its attention on more readily available data, but it is argued that the very exclusion of such a large component of Australia's artistic landscape significantly diminishes national claims about artistic and cultural endeavour. More comprehensive information about where artistic

activities are taking place may encourage strategies that: provide audiences with increased opportunities to see, hear and experience art; improve and share use of infrastructure throughout the year; and encourage a greater proportion of art collections to be taken out of the basements of the humanities building and senior executive corridors for public viewing.

The lack of reliable and comparable data removes our ability to ensure that Australian artists, irrespective of the location of their practice, are given the opportunity to contribute their best for Australian, and international, audiences. As universities increasingly apply promotion and funding criteria more suited to the science lab than the art studio, support for artists to continue their practice can be squeezed out, along with the space, time and infrastructure that is afforded to students, Australia's future artistic leaders. Concerns that journal articles about artwork are replacing actual artworks being produced and fears of a university system that produces 'good research' and 'bad art' are being shared by academics across the country. Public annual reporting would remind universities that, as custodians of Australia's current and emerging artists and a significant proportion of our cultural heritage, they need to do more to support their artists and audiences. As Howard Singerman (1999) observed: 'the university is a crucial structuring site where artists and art worlds are mapped and reproduced' (1999, p. 210). It shapes how current artists and future artists produce their work, and influences, and indeed evaluates, their concepts of what constitutes excellence in the arts. Collecting accurate data on where, how and which universities are supporting artistic work would allow better tracking of this aspect of cultural endeavour and perhaps even allow anticipation of future artistic standing.

The Australia Council, as the operational arm of the Commonwealth Government Arts Ministry, would seem an appropriate locus to take responsibility for the task of reminding universities that, despite any changes within research or higher education policy, they have a national responsibility to support the quality of, and access to, artistic work that emanates from their component of our *Arts Nation*.

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