



# Victoria's first creative industries strategy

Swinburne's contribution to the discussion

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# Developing Victoria's first creative industries strategy

## Introduction

Swinburne University of Technology ("Swinburne") is pleased to make this submission to the Creative Industries Taskforce.

Victoria is fortunate to have internationally-acclaimed industries in creative, visual and performing arts, design, animation, games, media, film and fashion. As the discussion paper details, the creative industries is a broad and interconnected field that makes important cultural, social and economic contributions to Victoria.



Government, through the Ministry for the Arts. Swinburne sees NICA as an important national resource that has the potential to give Melbourne (and Victoria) the international profile that Cirque de Soleil has given Montreal (Quebec, Canada).

## **2. Growing the creative and cultural industries for greater impact**

Swinburne supports the principle of a more cohesive Creative Industries strategy. Creativity and inter-disciplinary collaboration are essential ingredients for Australia's future competitiveness. Creative industries are intensive users of technology and are often the source of technology innovation. Creativity is often used to develop break-through products, new production processes, or develop new markets – it can drive economic growth<sup>1</sup>. It is important to encourage collaboration within the creative indust

and virtual products and services. A number of studies have highlighted the long-term impact of good design and how it is able to value-add to industries like manufacturing<sup>4</sup>. It is critical for Victoria's economy that the manufacturing sector invests in design-led innovation and understands the value that creativity can bring to business. The creative industries, and particularly design, play a key role in linking academia and business for industrial innovation. However, there needs to be better mechanisms and incentives for industry to engage with design focused organisations and universities like Swinburne. Australia ranks 29 out of 30 OECD countries when it comes to businesses collaborating with universities and research organisations<sup>5</sup>. To date, Australia has not been able to

Another area where Government has an important role to play is in procurement policies and practices, specifically the commissioning of buildings, furniture, equipment, and in the development of new systems and services. Governments can utilise the creative industries to bring innovation and change across sectors. Policies in the management of healthcare, in the management of our schools and in the management of public services, can all be framed to enhance and support our creative industries. Good design has been recognised as having an increased effect on public policy and greater civil engagement<sup>7</sup>. Design and the arts more generally, play an important role in reframing problems and provide processes for meaningful public sector reform.

### **2.1 Recommendation 1**

Ensure that design industries are given similar support and representations within Creative Victoria, as other sectors in the Arts.

### **2.2 Recommendation 2**

Government to lead by example in developing public policy for the procurement and commissioning of Victorian design and creative services for urban planning, health, education and social policies.

### **2.3 Recommendation 3**

The resources of NICA could be leveraged to create the type of international profile that Cirque de Soleil has by Victoria supporting, for a time limited period, an international performing company comprised of Australian performers trained at NICA, or other Australian programs.

### **2.4 Recommendation 4**

The Victorian government could better promote an understanding of, and educate businesses and industry about the immense social, cultural and economic benefits of creative activity, and its export potential.

## **3. Increase government support for creative education**

Swinburne plays a critical role in the education and training of our future creative professionals. Both creative education and the potential future careers of our graduates need to be cultivated and supported. The recent Federal Government proposal to reduce higher education government contributions payments will hit the creative arts hard. The proposal will see a 25% reduction in government contributions from \$12,053 to \$9,033. This is likely to have a negative impact on students making a choice about a career in the creative industries.

For the past ten years, national

In Victoria, the successful completion of VCE Year 12 subjects (unit 4) in creative arts disciplines has also been in decline for the past five years<sup>9</sup>. In particular, the 2014 Product Design and Technology and Visual Communication Design courses have had 1388 less subject completions than 2009, with direct implications for the creation of new industries, or expansion of existing ones in Victoria. The only growth area over this time has been in Media, as highlighted in the following table.

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The fragmented nature of the creative industries and the fact that 98% of these businesses have less than twenty employees<sup>11</sup> means that the opportunities for mentorships, internships and graduates are limited. There would seem to be some structural problems in the creative industry sectors that limit companies' growth. A large number of creative companies have less than five employees and sub-contract work with freelance talent, as and when required. Without future opportunities for growth, much of the talent graduating from Victorian universities will be lost overseas and leave Victoria without the crucial skills it needs for industrial innovation.

### **3.1 Recommendation 5**

Consider a strategy to cluster creative activity and businesses - particularly entrepreneurial and start-up businesses – in shared spaces. These activities could be extensions, or creative incubation centres, connected to universities like Swinburne.

### **3.2 Recommendation 6**

Provide targeted business funding support for emerging creative agencies, to enable strategic growth and exploit export opportunities. Swinburne suggests a five year demonstration program of targeted support for emerging creative SMEs, so that they have the ability to stabilise at a level of sustainability (for example >20 employees).

### **3.3 Recommendation 7**

Consider structural changes and/or incentives (e.g. rent concessions) for high growth start-ups (e.g. 10-20 employees) to support their growth.

