Without warning, she asked me, “Hey Watanabe, can you explain the difference between the English present subjunctive and the past subjunctive?”

“I think I can,” I said.

“Let me ask you, then, what possible use is stuff like that for everyday life?”

“None at all,” I said. “It may not serve any concrete purpose, but it does give you some kind of training to help you grasp things in general more systematically.”

Midori gave that a moment’s serious thought. “You’re amazing,” she said. “That never occurred to me before. I always thought of things like the subjunctive case and differential calculus and chemical symbols as totally useless. A pain in the neck. So I’ve always ignored them. Now I have to wonder if my whole life has been a mistake.”

Haruki Murakami
Norwegian Wood

The value to society of its members being literate across a broad range of cultural forms – to be familiar with the big ideas in the major forms of knowledge – is a function of much more than the specific application of that knowledge in the immediate term. Even in purely economic terms, it seems clear that what we have learned – including (crucially) modes of thinking and new ways of seeing – tends to come in handy in new contexts. Add the social and cultural value of more of society feeling competent to understand (at least to some degree) a broad selection of its workings and there are good arguments – not only for government, but also for business and industry – for the preservation of liberal education, right across the disciplines.

As a nation we need to work harder at putting into practice the idea that a healthy society needs viable education and research across the board, including those elements of our culture for which we might have no personal or immediate use. Business has a lead role to play in this. In the case of the humanities, the problem is partly to do with the seldom enunciated but deeply held view that these disciplines are, now that the chips are down (and the chips are always down), a very nice thing that will be missed but that can be lived without. Indeed, some fields of study come under attack for being, if not quite completely pointless, at least insufficiently pointful.

The limit case of arcane academic indulgence is often said to be Skaldic poetry. A standard jibe about Old Norse is par for the course at any gathering across disciplinary lines. But if studies in early English language and literature lead nowhere, as it is sometimes argued, someone ought to tell the New Zealand tourist industry to give all the punters their money back. The Kiwis have been cashing in big-time on a tale influenced considerably by JRR Tolkien’s studies in the field.

As the Murakami quotation shows, the sciences can be just as susceptible to this sort of attack as the humanities: “the subjunctive case, differential calculus and chemical symbols.” All advanced forms of expert knowledge are vulnerable to charges of irrelevance simply because their application or value is not obvious to the casual outside observer (or the unimaginative undergraduate).
Although deep space astronomy is probably no more commercially applicable in the short run than ancient literary studies, pure mathematics, epistemology or theoretical physics, there is no doubt that each of these disciplines has, over time, contributed incredible breakthrough discoveries that have utterly changed the way we live now. Few of the big ideas in the history of thought – ideas that underpin all innovation – would have won support in an environment that had no room for curiosity-driven research and the liberal education programmes that accompany it.

Few of the big ideas in the history of thought – ideas that underpin all innovation – would have won support in an environment that had no room for curiosity-driven research and the liberal education programmes that accompany it.

In the end, of course, most scholarship and other cultural activity does serve some kind of concrete purpose: just not necessarily when or in the way that might have been imagined at the time. Niels Bohr did not set out to invent the microwave oven when he started to thinking about the structure of the atom, yet that’s where his research ultimately led. Miguel de Cervantes did not seek to alter utterly the Western conception of the individual, yet that is what his work achieved. Our entire social structure – of which business is a major participant – is shaped the way it is significantly because of the influence of Don Quixote.

And the first translation into English of Norwegian Wood was made for use strictly in-country by Japanese business students who were studying our language to get an edge in the industries of trade. Were its translator not proficient in the rules of English grammar – such as the subjunctive mood – the book would not have been a very effective teaching tool.

Business possess a lot more knowledge about the humanities than it is probably aware it does: after all, every one of us could watch a dozen shows on television about history, philosophy and the people of the world without ever realising that we are beneficiaries of the humanities in the way we register ‘science’ when Catalyst comes on. But a more conscious and strategic engagement with the ways of knowing that are concerned with what it means to be human will not only be to the advantage of business, but will also enhance the contribution of business to the society on which it depends.

The articles in this issue cover a huge amount of territory in the relationship between the humanities and business, from sharp-edge R&D, to the complete MBA, to corporate citizenship. If this survey has a common theme, it is that business and the humanities are inherently linked, and that exploring this engagement is not only desirable, but crucial – to business, to government and to society at large.

With a career spanning both business and academe, I have been fortunate to have seen both sides of the coin as it were, and have become increasingly concerned at the trend to “vocationalise” the education we offer our budding business people, and particularly those who may exercise leadership.

I well remember many years ago, on a business visit to the United States, discussing this matter with a very successful CEO of one of the largest pension funds in that country. He told me he had received the best education possible for his job. I expected him to refer to an MBA from a prestigious ivy league university with lots of finance, economics, marketing, management studies, etc. But he said, “Greek and mathematics”.

One of the papers in this volume refers to a comment about MBA graduates being “well trained but poorly educated”. It was this sort of concern that led me to ask Dr John Byron, Executive Director of the Australian Academy of the Humanities, if he would be the Guest Editor of a volume of B-HERT NEWS on the topic of business and the humanities. I was delighted by his ready acceptance.

John has managed to solicit an array of first class contributions to this debate. The papers in this volume cover a diversity of aspects and raise a number of important issues both for business and higher education.

I thank John and all the authors for their willingness to contribute and for the quality of their papers. I have no doubt the readers will find them interesting, stimulating and thought provoking.

THE ATTRACTION OF STRANGERS: INDUSTRY PARTNERSHIPS IN HUMANITIES RESEARCH

INTRODUCTION
In 2003, the Centre for Cultural Research at the University of Western Sydney conducted a major research project in collaboration with the Australian Academy of the Humanities. Funded by the Australian Research Council, Partnerships in Humanities Research looked into the operation of the ARC’s Linkage Projects grants programme, which supports collaborative research projects between higher education researchers and industry.

As an industry we need to have some really hard data. It’s something we’re not funded to do, so we need to form these partnerships and relationships. It’s a matter of survival.

– Industry partner

By IEN ANG
Director of the Centre for Cultural Research
University of Western Sydney

HISTORY
The ARC Linkage Projects grants programme was introduced in 2002, replacing the Strategic Partnerships with Industry Research and Training (SPIRT) scheme (1998–2001). Between 1998 and 2003, there were 178 HCA projects funded through the SPIRT and Linkage Projects programmes. In 2002 and 2003/Round 1, the ARC awarded $9,282,208 to Linkage Projects in the HCA disciplines. The average funding awarded was $210,959 per project over three years.

There was an interesting learning period, where we spent a lot of time finding a shared language that we could use so that we understood what we were on about… it was, at times, difficult, but we had such a commitment to the worth of the project.

– Industry partner

EXAMPLES OF LINKAGE PROJECTS
The following case studies are some examples of Linkage Projects that have recently been funded in the HCA. These projects tackle important issues in Australia where technology alone cannot provide the answer.

Transforming Drivers: Driving as Social, Cultural and Gendered Practice
Researchers: Dr Zoe Sofoulis, Dr Greg Noble, and Dr Sarah Redshaw (University of Western Sydney)

Industry partners: Ms Anne Morphett and Mr Alan Finlay (NRMA Motoring & Services)
The accident statistics on young drivers aren’t very encouraging. Drivers aged from 17–20 years are three times more likely to be involved in a crash than those aged 21 and over. Last year, young drivers aged 17–25 years, who represent 15 per cent of the population, accounted for around 25 per cent of all road fatalities.

There were an interesting learning period, where we spent a lot of time finding a shared language that we could use so that we understood what we were on about… it was, at times, difficult, but we had such a commitment to the worth of the project.

– Industry partner

It makes these young people more aware of the factors that influence their driving and the choices they make as drivers or passengers.
The aim of this collaboration is to gain a new insight into young people’s driving behaviour that will lead to a culture of change and, ultimately, reduce the road toll.

The research concept has been embraced not only by NRMA, but also by local council road safety officers and young drivers throughout NSW. The project has attracted widespread media interest, reflecting the significance of this issue to the general community.

Interaction & Visual Design for Online Youth Counselling

Researchers: Professor Stuart Cunningham, Dr Terry Flew, Mr Richard Jones, Ms Oksana Zelenko, and Ms Joy Chen (Queensland University of Technology)

Industry partner: Ms Wendy Reid (Kids Help Line)

Kids Help Line has been providing counselling and support – or simply a friendly ear – to young people since 1991 through its national telephone counselling service. Last year, more than 1.1 million people between the ages of 5 and 18 dialled the freecall number for help with problems including relationships with family, friends or partners, bullying, teenage pregnancy, child abuse and drug and alcohol issues.

Strong demand from young people prompted the organisation to develop an online counselling service, where young people can seek help from counsellors using a specially designed ‘chat room’. In 2003, almost 15,000 young people from all over Australia logged on. But Kids Help Line wanted more. Emotions and feelings don’t translate well in typed messages, and many young people have problems expressing their feelings through the typed word. The partnership between QUT Creative Industries and Kids Help Line has overcome this. Kids can now incorporate visual images into their online counselling sessions.

Young people can choose images and colours to show how they feel. The new visual tools allow them to express their feelings more effectively. The counsellors also find the new tools helpful, especially with young people who are feeling overwhelmed or who have difficulty identifying and describing their inner state.

This partnership enabled students in the creative field to work with counsellors in adapting traditional counselling practices to new and innovative online formats. Their approach has ensured that kids in remote communities with limited technical resources aren’t left behind.

The system remains accessible on older, slower computers with standard dial-up internet connections. This ensures that young people from Sydney to the Pilbara have equal access to counselling.

The project has generated strong commercial interest both in Australia and overseas.

THE INDUSTRY PARTNERS

The following list is a selection of organisations that have participated as industry partners in collaborative research projects:

- Special Broadcasting Service (SBS)
- Australian War Memorial
- Bureau of Meteorology
- Palmtree Wutaru Aboriginal Corporation
- Sydney Harbour Foreshore Authority
- Corporation of the City of Adelaide
- Melbourne Magistrates’ Court
- West Australian Police Force
- Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority
- National Library of Australia
- Art Gallery of New South Wales

It’s made me think much more constructively rather than just critically. Rather than sitting back and providing this critique of why the partner got it all wrong, it is: how can I provide something which says, ‘well, this is how we do it’, or ‘this may be the way to go’.

– Industry partner

THE STUDY

Working together with my colleague Dr Elizabeth Cassity, we collected information for this study through a survey and one-on-one interviews, and combined it with statistical data provided by the ARC. Case studies and findings were discussed at a symposium at the University of Western Sydney in February 2004. The results of the survey provided a snapshot of the research partnerships, identified the main players, and gave us insights into what works and what does not work in a humanities partnership context. The interviews enabled us to probe in detail how these partnerships work – or sometimes do not work.

I can’t put it down much more than to the ability to listen to what they want, and to be prepared to explain why the research is of value, to be able to stand my ground a bit and to convince them… to be able to define the mutually beneficial aspects of the collaboration and not lose sight of those.

– Industry partner
CONCLUSIONS
Industry reports strong benefits from its collaborations with the HCA sector. Industry wants to see an extension of the programme, together with an education programme so all partners enter projects with a better understanding of the possibilities and limitations of such arrangements. Many people in industry said they had not recognised the expertise the HCA sector offers, and the assistance the sector can offer in solving intractable problems and creating innovative solutions.

Impact on industry: Industry partners have expressed a resounding enthusiasm for the Linkage Projects scheme. It enables industry to have access to high quality research capacity and networks, and provides innovative solutions to complex problems and issues.

Impact on the Humanities and Creative Arts: An increasing number of HCA researchers are participating in research partnerships with industry. This has led to a gradual change in practice, scope and focus of research. HCA researchers are developing their research in collaboration with colleagues in industry.

Impact on the national innovation system: The Linkage Projects programme is a major driver in breaking down the divide between researchers and industry. There is significant growth potential for these collaborative partnerships, and the contribution they make to the national innovation system.

RECOMMENDATIONS
The success of the Linkages scheme in HCA, despite its modest current support, suggests strongly that further investment in the scheme in these disciplines will deliver significant benefits to industry, researchers and the taxpayer. Based on the evidence of our research, we recommend that government, industry and universities work together to:

1. Promote Linkage Projects more widely throughout industry, and emphasise the R&D benefits of collaborative research with Humanities and Creative Arts researchers.
2. Publicise the benefits of participation in Linkage Projects widely throughout the Humanities and Creative Arts community.
3. Run workshops for researchers to improve their skills at managing projects in a professional manner.
4. Require projects to have a plain-language summary of the project, which sets out how the project partners intend communicating the results of the project to industry, to their colleagues in research, and to the general public.
5. Increase funding allocated to the Linkages programme steadily over the next five years, to quadruple the allocation.
6. Create mechanisms that support and encourage Early Career Researchers in pursuing collaborative research with industry.
7. Develop networking programmes where academic researchers can meet with and get to know potential partners from industry.

In a nutshell, the most important contribution that the Linkage programme makes for us is that it gives us a research capacity in conjunction with the universities that we just absolutely wouldn’t have.

— Industry partner

I’ve been working in this field for a very long time, about thirty years or something, and these research projects have really caused me to have a fundamental rethink about the nature of the work that I’ve been doing, and that’s fabulous ... and I think it’s taking us in a different direction.

— University researcher

A copy of the full report may be obtained from The Australian Academy of the Humanities (contact details at www.humanities.org.au).
As the 21st century advances, common horizons will connect people from the disciplines of science, the humanities and management towards the goal of innovation. This is going to be the primary means for Australia to achieve ongoing economic and social advancement and be able to compete in a global world. It will have the most significant implications for individuals in blending their work, community interests, personal lives and aspirations. But national prosperity based on a thriving private enterprise sector will remain the foundation.

A multi-disciplinary approach is the key to success in this new era – for enduring economic growth and prosperity, social vitality, community development and personal fulfilment. At its core is a holistic set of skills that enable individuals to adapt to change and companies to be competitive, and to create the climate for the innovation so essential to meet these objectives. One of the principal findings of a Business Council of Australia (BCA) survey of leading Australian companies was that in a global economy which increasingly values knowledge, the fostering of world-class education, skill development and innovation in Australia is essential for the enhancement of our competitiveness.1

The BCA exerts considerable influence in the debate on national agenda priorities and in advocating the most desirable future direction for Australia. The organisation brings together the CEOs of the 100 top Australian companies to lead the public policy debate on building a better and more prosperous Australia. Our Members represent the major Australian companies and international majors operating in Australia in sectors including technology and telecommunications, banking, resources and energy, manufacturing, retailing, insurance, legal and business services and transport.

The BCA Secretariat and CEO Members contribute high-level expertise based on a diverse spread of disciplines. Overall, we are steeped in the humanities, in many cases combining a multi-disciplinary background of arts degrees and qualifications in areas such as the law, business management, economics, commerce, finance, engineering, the sciences, computer science, and mathematics.

A focal point of the BCA’s work in recent times has been on innovation and its link to productivity and national prosperity. A 2004 report, based on a survey of our Members, identified innovation, and not the level of the research and development (R&D) spent, as the main driver of increased productivity.

The survey pointed to the fact that the way innovation is measured officially is both confused and misleading. It found that the main focus of the debate should be whether current activities by businesses in Australia are maximising the potential level of innovation within the economy. Appropriate judgment on this issue rests not on whether Australian businesses are spending relatively more or less on R&D than businesses from other countries but rather on an assessment of the effectiveness of the innovation process.2

The survey found the key factors enabling or inhibiting innovation capability included:

- outcomes of the education and training system;
- business strategy;
- workforce skills and capabilities;
- workplace training and development;
- the work environment;
- design and processes; and
- organisational culture.

The report noted that innovation is increasingly about process adaptation, applications of new technologies or the outcome of capital investment in new plant and equipment – a trend that requires the ability to think creatively.

It also found a pressing need for increased interdependence between business and universities and public research institutions to leverage Australia’s capability to be innovative.

These findings help to define the elements that make up a culture of innovation, which is critical for the nation to enjoy continuing economic growth, increased productivity (in which Australia’s record over the past decade has been impressive by world standards), enduring prosperity and social benefit.

This kind of thinking has fed into the enhanced set of National Research Priorities3, in the development of which the Australian Academy of the Humanities played an important role, along with considerable involvement on the part of the BCA.

Each research priority now incorporates additional goals recognising the importance of the human element in research and knowledge creation. These human elements encompass environmental sustainability, the promotion of good health, a focus on frontier technologies to build and transform Australian industries, and the need to safeguard the nation. The BCA regards this approach as an important step in broadening the debate on innovation.

This helps depict just who the innovators are. They are people from different sectors and disciplines who bring a diverse range of qualities and values to the process.
The humanities disciplines offer a range of essential qualities that go to make up the skill set – the ability to think strategically and incisively, construct logical, persuasive arguments, have the capability to navigate important debates using concepts as against the black box evidence and proof approach and to integrate and synthesise complex information from varied and often conflicting sources.

The human element in the culture of innovation that will be the guide to our economic and social development through this century is underlined in a forward-looking report compiled by IBM. The report found that:

language provided the foundation on which all future progress of human civilisation would be built. As simple a notion as that may be, it holds lessons about innovation that we at the beginning of the 21st century would do well to consider: innovation requires more human interaction and broad-scale adoption, and is almost always more about what we do with an idea than the idea itself.

The report went on to state that “21st century innovation should be defined as beginning at the intersection of invention and insight: we innovate when a new thought, technology, business model or service actually changes society ... Instead of creating technologies that we assume will somehow improve our quality of life, we should examine aspects of our lives that most require improvement, then work across disciplines and specialties to bring innovation to bear on them.”4

This supports what we at the BCA have come to term employability skills – the capability to learn and adapt or, skills for life. A survey of our Members as to which employability skills – the capability to learn and adapt to keep extending our skills and adapting to change. Employability skills are those that give us the basis to keep extending our skills and adapting to change.

Another core factor concerns the policy framework necessary to foster innovation, as highlighted in the BCA report:

Government policies should continue to focus on maintaining a robust, flexible and strongly growing economy which in turn will provide the environment for business investment including research and development investment ... As well, more importance could be placed on policies such as co-location of research facilities and collaboration between private companies and public research institutions to help reduce costs for businesses associated with R&D activities by encouraging a greater level of sharing of facilities ... (our) responses need to focus on improving the skill base of Australian workers and researchers, and ensuring that businesses have access to the equipment and facilities that they require to make R&D activities commercially viable.

In this context, it should be emphasised that business is heavily involved, both with funding and by direct engagement, in the work of the majority of Australia’s Co-operative Research Centres and through its collaboration with our world-leading research institute CSIRO (in development and commercialisation).

For the future, the humanities are integral to the multi-disciplinary capability that will be essential for our understanding and ability to cope and adapt to constant change. This is critical to the ongoing development of business and the evolution of business practice. The future state of the nation depends on high calibre innovation derived from home-grown discoveries and the development of new solutions and a readiness to take up, adapt and apply advances from the world-leading nations that command a far greater proportion of intellectual property than does Australia.

IBM’s report strengthens the case:

If innovation will continue to occur more rapidly in the 21st century, it follows that knowledge, expertise and skills will change just as rapidly ... This strongly implies two things. First, workers will no longer be able to rely on expertise (including university degrees) earned early in life to keep them at the front of the skills queue. Second, it will be unlikely that universities and other educational institutions trying to keep abreast of the dynamic nature of work will be able to do so. Furthermore, because innovation will require more collaboration, aspiring knowledge workers will need cross-disciplinary degrees and programs of study to compete.5

Employability skills are those that give us the basis to keep extending our skills and adapting to change. More than ever, people today need the ability, as American business philosopher Peter Koestenbaum puts it, to reconcile the realities of business with basic human values. Koestenbaum insists that, “Unless the distant goals of meaning, greatness and destiny are addressed, we can’t make an intelligent decision about what to do tomorrow morning – much less set strategy for a company or for a human life.”6

1 ‘Research and Development Investment by Australia’s Leading Businesses,’ Business Council of Australia, December 2004
2 ‘Research and Development Investment by Australia’s Leading Businesses,’ Business Council of Australia, December 2004
3 Refined four-point National Research Priorities framework launched by the Federal Government, 28 November 2003
4 ‘Global Innovation Outlook 2004,’ IBM
5 ‘Global Innovation Outlook 2004,’ IBM
6 Article by Polly LaBarre, (c) 2004 Gruner & Jahr USA Publishing. First published in Fast Company Magazine
The topic of the humanities and business irresistibly conjures up the image of the little match seller (‘le petite marchande des allumettes’); nose pressed to the window pane, looking in on the grand life within. The humanities (and the rest of the human sciences, which include the creative arts and the social sciences) are thought to operate as a kind of handmaiden to the R&D powerhouses of science, engineering and technology, which in turn feed the growth businesses which deliver rising standards of living and consequential social benefits. In this view, the human sciences at best might help us to understand and manage the consequences of moving to a knowledge-based economy, but they could never be the sparkplug that ignites business growth and opportunity. But this handmaiden model is patently inadequate to capture the growing contribution of the content and creative industries and the social phenomena that have rapidly grown around them in contemporary societies. Creative production and cultural consumption are an increasingly integral part of the growth economy, not merely part of analysing and managing it. The human sciences that undergird them should be seen as similarly central.

The creative industries are an emergent sector of the services economy of significant scale and dynamism worldwide. In the US the copyright industries were worth US$791.2bn in 2001, representing 7.75% of GDP and employing 8m workers. Their share of US foreign sales/exports was US$88.97bn – outstripping the chemical, motor vehicle, aircraft, agricultural, electronic components, and computer sectors. In the UK in the same year (but differently defined), they generated revenues of £112.5bn, employing 1.3m people, with £10.3bn exports and over 5% of GDP. In addition to scale, the creative industries are significant because they are drivers of the knowledge economy and enablers for other industry sectors especially through the provision of digital content which ‘translates directly into the competitive advantage and innovation capability of other sectors of the economy’ as well as through the nurturing of creative human capital and a creative workforce. Content and creative industries constitute an increasingly significant element of developed nations’ economies.

Rather than being relegated to a residual or marginal status, sociologists Scott Lash and John Urry and business analyst John Howkins claim that creative production has become a model for new economy business practice. Rifkin claims that cultural production will ascend to the first tier of economic life, with information and services moving to the second tier, manufacturing to the third tier and agriculture to the fourth tier.

Most R&D priorities reflect a science and technology-led agenda at the expense of new economy imperatives for R&D in the content industries, broadly defined. However, as Rifkin argues, the broad content industries sector derives from the applied social and creative disciplines (business, education, leisure and entertainment, media and communications) and represents 25% of the US economy, whilst the new science sector (agricultural biotech, fiber, construction materials, energy and pharmaceuticals) for example, accounts for only 13% of the economy. In fact all modern economies are increasingly consumption driven (60% of GDP in Australia and 62% of US GDP) and the social and cultural technologies that manage and stimulate consumption all derive from the social and creative disciplines.

In Australia, these industries or enterprises are valued at between $19 and $25 billion a year (the elasticity of the figures are the tip of a large iceberg of statistical imponderability) – as much as the residential construction industry. And think how much the construction industry sits at centre stage as an index of the nation’s economic health! The creative industries are growing at a fast clip. In the high growth areas, like digital content and applications, they are growing at twice the rate of the overall economy. Many Australians are involved in the creative industries, ranging from hobbyists to full time employees and small businesspeople: 2.5 million say they work in these areas, and of those about 900,000 get paid for it.

We can no longer afford to understand the social and creative disciplines as commercially irrelevant, merely ‘civilising’ activities. Instead they must be recognised as one of the vanguards of the growth economy.

We can no longer afford to understand the social and creative disciplines as commercially irrelevant, merely ‘civilising’ activities. Instead they must be recognised as one of the vanguards of the growth economy. R&D strategies must work to catch the emerging wave of innovation needed to meet demand for content creation in entertainment, education and health information, and to build and exploit universal networked broadband architectures in strategic partnerships with industry.
Not only is R&D in the applied social and creative disciplines required for their own commercial potential, but also because such R&D must be hybridised with science and technology research to realise the commercial potential of the latter. Commercialisation depends on ‘whole product value propositions’ not just basic research.

The growth economy requires both R and D: the contexts, meanings and effects of cultural consumption, in Rilklin’s terms, are as important for purposes of policy development as creative production. The work of Richard Florida, in The Rise of the Creative Class, stands as eloquent testimony to this indivisibility. Major international content growth areas, such as online education, interactive television, multi-platform entertainment, computer games, web design for business-to-consumer applications, or virtual tourism and heritage, need research that seeks to understand how complex systems involving entertainment, information, education, technological literacy, integrated marketing, lifestyle and aspirational psychographics and cultural capital interrelate.

They also need development through trialing and prototyping supported by test beds and infrastructure provision in R&D-style laboratories. They need these in the context of ever shortening innovation cycles and greater competition in rapidly expanding global markets. R&D strategies must work to catch the emerging wave of innovation needed to meet demand for content creation in entertainment, education and health information, and to build and exploit universal networked broadband architectures in strategic partnerships with industry.

What, practically, does this mean for Australian business? Business leaders – and B-HERT might act as a key forum for this – need to consider whether it is in their interests to support the development and diversification of the national innovation system to include these industry sectors and disciplinary inputs. This amounts to building an Australian ‘creative innovation system’ – deciding whether the creative and content industries and the disciplines that undergird them – are going to be ‘match sellers’ or ‘sparkplugs’ in Australian business and government strategy.

Currently, they are not on the radar of mainstream R&D and innovation policies, which remain resolutely focused on science and technology, barely beginning to address even the services sector. Australia’s national policy focus – from the national Innovation Summit in early 2000 which set the stage for Backing Australia’s Ability, to the voluminous Mapping Australian Science and Innovation study from the Department of Education, Science and Training in 2003 which underpinned the second iteration of Backing Australia’s Ability – follows this pattern.

However, there has been some progress in putting the human sciences and the content and creative industries on the national agenda. Australia now has a set of national research priorities that are much more progressive than the original very narrow set of exclusively ‘new science’ priorities. Due to persistent lobbying rather than a ‘rational-comprehensive’ policy process, there is now an explicit human science dimension to all four national research priorities, albeit still conceptualised largely in handmaiden mode. The priority for ‘Frontier technologies for building and transforming Australian industries’, though, has a substantial focus on digital content and innovation. In this priority area there are key statements such as ‘research is needed to exploit the huge potential of the digital media industry’, and a number of examples of content applications such as e-commerce, multimedia, content generation and imaging are mentioned for priority research and development. In addition, under the priority goal of ‘Promoting an innovation culture and economy’ there is a stated intention to prioritise ‘maximising Australia’s creative and technological capability by understanding the factors conducive to innovation and its acceptance’.

It is early days in tracking how this opportunity for R&D in creative and content innovation might play out, but in building this pathway, Australia is in company with emergent international trends. The European Commission’s Framework Program 6 is organised into thematic areas. Most are still science and technology-focused but there are two areas – Information Society Technologies, and Citizens and Governance in a knowledge based society – which will directly support arts and humanities research. Information Society Technologies includes two categories of direct relevance: Cross media content for leisure and entertainment, and Technology enhanced learning and access to cultural heritage. In the US, reports such as Beyond Productivity are a good example of a probe from the National Academy searching for purchase for an investment strategy for the digital arts and design based on innovation (William Mitchell et al 2003, Beyond Productivity: Information Technology, Innovation and Creativity, Washington: National Academies Press). In New Zealand, the Foundation for Research, Science and Technology has promulgated explicit R&D policy for the creative industries, identified as a national ‘Growth and Innovation Framework’ priority along with biotech and ICT.

The case for Australian business working with the human science disciplines to turn them from match sellers to sparkplugs is now on the table. Here are some leading examples. The Creative Industries Cluster Study, a research program initiated by the Department of Communications, Information Technology and the Arts (www.cultureandrecreation.gov.au/cics/), has begun to build this agenda. One of the reports in the study program outlines the shape of a national creative innovation system. A Digital Content Industry Action Agenda is being promulgated, with an R&D and Education/Training component integral to it. The Australasian CRC for Interaction Design, the first Cooperative Research Centre devoted to building and prototyping creative applications, is into its second full year of operations (www.interactiondesign.qut.edu.au). A study program conducted by CHASS and funded by the Department of Education, Science and Training tells us a lot about how the human sciences are appropriately commercialising their IP (chass.org.au), beginning to dispel the assumption that these disciplines are a dead zone for commercialisation. The Australian Mobile Telecommunications Association (AMTA), the peak body for Australia’s high growth mobile telecommunications industry, tasked a group of human science specialists auspiced by the Academy of
the Social Sciences in Australia to prepare an agenda for long term research into the social and cultural impact of mobile communications.

It is not only possible but necessary to imagine other ways for business and society at large to harness the energy and vast potential of the creative and cultural disciplines and practices. We simply cannot afford to let these resources – which will play a major part in solving our toughest problems, and in taking up and advancing our greatest opportunities – to be underutilised, or fade from neglect just as we need them more than ever.

Since the time of writing, it has been announced that the new Centre of Excellence in Cultural and Media Industries, to be based at QUT and led by Stuart Cunningham, will be funded by the Australian Research Council at $7 million dollars over five years, in addition to industry and university support expected to be worth more than $3 million. It will play a pivotal role in strengthening research and innovation in the digital content and creative industries in Australia.

Manning Clark, one of Australia’s great humanists, appropriated a quotation from the Russian novelist Dostoevsky to define his personal quest and intellectual pursuit: “I want to be there when everyone suddenly understands what it has all been for”.

I am unsure whether an education in the liberal arts prompts or is the result of this innate curiosity about meaning. I am, however, quite sure a foundational education in the humanities hones patterns of thinking and sensibilities much needed in all aspects of contemporary life. This is particularly so in today’s increasingly interconnected global environment for business, public policy, entertainment and information exchange. The older I become the more grateful I am for having read history for my first degree. Encountering the past has provided me with perspectives which inform my approaches to decision making and judgement, and an openness to “the other” which has eased my way into cross-cultural engagements and inter-disciplinary frameworks for innovation. In this brief essay I will draw on my personal experiences to explore the important contribution of the humanities in these three areas of particular relevance to business and public life: the quality of decision making and judgement; the centrality of cross-cultural understandings in a globalised economy; and the crucial importance of interdisciplinary practice in innovation.

Attributing value to a liberal education is not to demean other faculties of learning, but rather to suggest that the liberal and creative arts are perhaps the only disciplines, along with “pure science”, to stand outside the dominant public policy paradigm promoting instrumental knowledge and narrow vocational training. For this they are penalised, many forgetting that these traditions of teaching and learning create habits of mind which are increasingly, not less, relevant to contemporary society.

It is worth examining these twin issues of instrumental knowledge and vocational training because I believe they have become significant hurdles to the appreciation of the value of the humanities. We have seen huge growth, over the past fifty years, in the size and importance of both commerce faculties and
graduate schools of business, and also in the demand for degrees that award entry into lucrative professional careers, from medicine to law. It is no coincidence that these professional “guild-like” faculties are those that are now attracting the highest number of full fee paying enrolments, and this is arguably because it is easy in these areas to work out the economic calculus of the likely return on investment for such an education. In research, public policy skews effort towards work that will attract industry support and produce “intellectual property” which can be commercialised. The research effort of universities and publicly funded institutes is judged explicitly on the number of patents lodged and the number of “spin out” companies formed to commercialise research. On the various boards and other bodies in which I have participated I hear minority voices plead for residual attention to “curiosity-driven” science or research. As I put these thoughts together now it strikes me just how ironic is that plea. The term “curiosity-driven” research ought to be dismissed as a tautology, but today it is not.

The irony is that business and industry needs more curiosity-driven research and strategic thinking, not the sort of poll-driven approaches that permeate most marketing departments. The irony is that business and industry needs more curiosity-driven research and strategic thinking, not the sort of poll-driven approaches that permeate most marketing departments. One of the most memorable pieces of research I recall from my corporate career in telecommunications was engaging people to go round the country and simply photograph where phones and equipment were located in people’s homes and offices in order to understand the context in which our products and services were actually used. It is ironic that, in my world of information and communications technology, some of the greatest technology revolutions and service breakthroughs – such as the personal computer, the Internet, email, and mobile text messaging – have emerged from the grass roots of people applying technology to their own useful purpose, and not from laboratories or the product development departments of major corporations. Management text books proliferate about “the innovator’s dilemma” and “disruptive innovation” with scarcely any acknowledgment of the scope for insights from the humanities and social sciences to help companies sidestep and avoid these problems.

Early in my career I was part of a novel multi-disciplinary corporate ‘think tank’ established to examine long term telecommunications trends and possible futures. The engineers, economists, psychologists and people from other disciplines in this group struggled to find a common language and agenda, much as today I find university and industry people passing each other like ships in the night within Cooperative Research Centres and in discussions about commercialising research. Disciplinary and cultural divides seem tightly linked, and this is an instructive insight in an era where one of the main challenges is how people from Eastern and Western traditions engage within a globalised economy. Every time I talk with CEOs of technology firms looking to engage in markets like China the conversation will eventually turn to their difficulty in getting their minds around the challenges of cross-cultural partnerships. “We simply don’t know how to approach entering these markets” is a recurrent refrain. Similarly, I regularly witness mutual incomprehension between business leaders and government policy makers and regulators. The linkage I am trying to make is this: the angst people experience in confronting the need to establish cross-cultural business and industrial frameworks feels and looks remarkably similar to the tensions I have observed in interdisciplinary pursuits.

Within my earlier multidisciplinary think tank experience a couple of us tried to explore this issue of conflicting “mindsets” to see if there were distinctive paradigms within specific professional groups for thinking about long-run planning issues. Using instruments from social psychology, we found engineers and discipline-based specialists did in fact employ different sets of assumptions from occupational groups like the librarians. Anthropologists or biologists, of course, would not have been at all surprised by findings about the power and the tyranny of tribes and tribal behaviour. But put this in the context of business negotiations and transactions between firms within complex and unfamiliar settings and we realise why effective partnerships and relationships are so difficult to establish and why many corporate leaders find themselves unprepared for the challenges of turbulent environments.

Against this background the value of the humanities is that they train us in patterns of thinking and habits of mind that are peculiarly pertinent to such situations. One benefit I now see in my educational background is the value of contextual analysis. Psychologists describe a phenomenon they term “figure ground reversal” which involves the interplay between the specific and the general within a situational landscape. The metaphor of landscapes of the mind is embedded in the cognitive frameworks and wisdom of strategic masters like Sun Tzu and Clausewitz – the intuitive interplay between the tactical and the strategic. The metaphor of landscapes and territories also inculcates the American iconography of the “frontier” which has informed US culture from the railroads, to space research and the mission of multinational corporations as they reinterpret the story of “how the west was won”. I recalled my earlier conversations with psychologists when I read Hawkins' recent book on the neuroscience of intelligence. Hawkins is the inventor of the Palm Pilot, and is intensely curious about the limits of computer and “artificial” intelligence. In his stimulating story of his obsession with understanding the mystery of intelligence, Hawkins stresses how the mind processes information through pattern recognition. Pattern recognition operates by setting up the context for and the linkages between discrete informational and sensory inputs to the brain; recognising patterns in our industrial and cultural landscapes thus underpins decision making and the generation and exploitation of those new and distinctive insights we call innovation.
A second inherent value of the humanities involves the power of story telling, the narrative about intent and the communication of meaning. What makes this art particularly pertinent within contemporary society is that it crucially informs knowledge and information exchange. Business schools like Harvard have developed an entire pedagogy around business “case studies” – or instructive stories. This is, of course what the humanities have always provided, and more. Examining stories about our common experience establishes a context for our own experience and decisions. It also fuels the imagination to contemplate alternative constructions of reality; alternative futures. Further reason why the notions of specialisation in vocational education and of instrumental knowledge merit examination is because these notions do not stack up in terms of economics and actual industry experience. Adam Smith – the founder of modern economics – had already flagged these pitfalls in 1776 in his seminal Wealth of Nations. (As an aside, it is worth noting that most people who invoke Smith and the other masters of economic orthodoxy have seldom actually read their works; perhaps this is signal evidence of the decline of liberal education.) Smith’s magisterial treatise begins with his famous proposition about the division of labour or specialisation being the underpinning of a market system. The 39 words of his opening paragraph have shaped modern capitalism. But Smith goes on for another 947 pages (in the definitive edition of his work). In these following pages he devotes a lot of attention to the question of how to offset the undesirable consequences of specialisation as a result of the narrowness of facility which, amongst other things, could reduce the population to “brutishness”. His answer to this is a public education system.

Smith also notes that the division of labour in society needs to involve freeing up a class of people to be thinkers; people who specialise in the general. Much of the source of invention and improvements in productivity, he notes, come from those …whose trade it is, not to do anything, but to observe everything; and who, upon that account, are often capable of combining together the powers of the most distant and dissimilar objects. (Book I.i.9)

Today commentators on industrial innovation talk at length about how innovation is interdisciplinary in nature, and how it tends to arise at the intersections between established disciplines and conventional practices. Adam Smith would have found himself entirely in agreement with John Seely Brown, of Xerox Parc fame, who recently wrote:

we are now looking for innovations in the interstices between different disciplines – for example, between bio and nanotechnologies. Any new model of innovation must find ways to leverage the different knowledge assets of people who see the world quite differently and who use tools and methods foreign to those we’re familiar with. Such people are likely to work in different disciplines and in different institutions. Finding successful ways to work with them will lie at the heart of innovating innovation. 3

The biggest challenge for industry today is the systemic integration of discrete areas of skill and specialisation within a framework of mutually reinforcing learning and innovation. The value creation in industrial processes – productivity – is a function of the collaborative synergies which produce the calculus of “1+1=3” outcomes. And the role of the humanities in this is that, in my strong opinion, it is they which produce the “observers of everything” with the habit of mind to explore the connections between “dissimilar objects”.

Finally, Smith anticipates the arguments we need at hand to debunk the contemporary rhetoric about “useful knowledge” and what one recent writer has described as the cult of philistinism.4 Smith distinguishes between value created by “knowledge in use” and “knowledge in exchange” which equates to the distinction in the literature between the codified knowledge fixed in patents and formal property rights and the intangible assets associated with tacit knowledge and “know how”. What is often forgotten in business is that “value in exchange” – how firms capitalise on their assets – depends crucially on the engine room of “value in use”, including increasingly the intangible assets and productivity arising from the deployment of human capital. We need to think about the social capital underpinning firm productivity and the operation of industry clusters. In other words, we need to rediscover what was described in the eighteenth century as the “art of manufactures”. The source of value here is the quality of people, their character, and the quality of their relationships. This thread brings us back to our central argument that the humanities can help shape special and superior characteristics in this human capital.

2 Jeff Hawkins, On Intelligence, New York, 2004
4 I highly commend Frank Furedi’s recent book, Where have all the Intellectuals Gone: Confronting 21st Century Philistinism, 2004, for its critique of instrumental knowledge
The humanists believed that the best way to educate leaders was by immersing students in the best literature of classical antiquity, especially its poetry, history, oratory and moral philosophy.

Therefore, the studia humanitatis, consisted of five disciplines drawn from the classical curriculum – grammar, poetry, rhetoric, history, and moral philosophy. The humanists believed that the best way to educate leaders was by immersing students in the best literature of classical antiquity, especially its poetry, history, oratory and moral philosophy.

The studia humanitatis was revived by the Renaissance humanists in the 15th and 16th centuries and today continues to influence contemporary pedagogical practice in Europe and in the United States. The origins of the studia humanitatis are apparent in the French lycée, the Italian liceo classico and the German gymnasion as well as in survey courses for American college students.

Humanist educators offered a counterpoint to this form of training. They believed that education should have a moral purpose and should fit youths to assume leadership roles in court and in civic life. They wanted to educate the entire social and political elite – they claimed to teach the skills and knowledge necessary for a human being to be truly free. Hence the expression, arites liberales.

The humanists wanted to create a particular type of person: men and women who would be virtuous, prudent and eloquent. An individual was civilised because they had read and identified with powerful examples of classical virtue. They were prudent because they had extended their human experience into the distant past through the study of history. And they were eloquent because they had studied the most articulate writers and speakers of the past and were thus in turn able to communicate virtue and prudence to others.
Sadly, the classical curriculum is not commonly practised in the Australian education system. Those charged with managing and directing our companies – the equivalent of the community leaders in Ancient times – are traditionally trained to be experts in accountancy, economics, engineering and science. This is also the demographic of the first degrees of management students who choose to study a Master of Business Administration in order to broaden their experience beyond their original specialisation. An MBA continues to be considered de rigueur for those wanting promotion to a position of leadership in business.

The management education curriculum, with its staple subjects of accounting, finance, operations, marketing, organisational behaviour, human resources and strategy, is designed to teach students to administer a business. In teaching MBA students to think strategically, management educators also seek to encourage students to stretch themselves beyond their expertise in order to contemplate alternative world views and to become aware of the impact of their decisions upon others.

The management literature is replete with books about what makes a good leader. The debate has never been resolved. This paper contends that the answer to true leadership lies in the program of studies devised by the Ancient Romans and Greeks, and later the Renaissance humanists, to create independent thinkers who could make wise decisions on behalf of their communities. It argues that managers should be trained in the traditional curriculum for business administration, but should be educated in the liberal arts.

“The outcome of these studies is to enable anyone to speak well and to inspire him to act as well as possible,” said Vergerio. “This is the mark of the greatest men and the absolutely finest characters.”

Scholarship, the pursuit of excellence and of truth, is frequently represented as indulgent and irrelevant, and that who pursue knowledge as elitist, out-of-touch and marginal. Frank Furedi, in his book Where have all the intellectuals gone? is predictably critical of how tertiary and post-graduate education – and management education in particular – stifles intellectual endeavour. He writes: “the marginalisation of intellectual passion in higher education (is) the unintended consequence of a new ethos of managerialism that dominates intellectual and cultural life.” Furedi says we have created a “cult of the banal” in our “celebration of ordinariness.”

To teach means to arouse curiosity, not to sate it. Alexander the Great declared that he owed no less to the latter he had only received life, but from the former he had received the good life. “Law, medicine, business; these are noble pursuits,” says the teacher, John Keating, played by Robin Williams in Dead Poets’ Society. “But love, passion, beauty, romance – these are what we stay alive for.”

Parents still name their children and it is chance – not choice – which gives a man his country. “But everyone acquires for himself the liberal arts and virtue itself, and these are the most desirable things a person can seek,” says Vergerio. “For wealth, glory, pleasures – these are transitory and fleeting. Character, however, and the fruits of the virtues endure undiminished and last forever.”
The course was designed to convey the view that what is important about any explanatory perspective is not what it explains, but what it assumes. A central aim of the course is, therefore, to encourage students to uncover and critically analyse assumptions.

The real object of lecturing is not to communicate information but to try to plant germinal ideas in the mind and to arouse curiosity, not to satisfy it. A lecture ought not to be a handing over of coined thoughts to be stored away in mental strong boxes...what one tries to do in a lecture is to make the subject appear charming and interesting; to tempt one's hearers to look into themselves; to sweep away the dreary tissue of unnecessary and useless knowledge in which many books involve a person and to present ideas in attractive form.

Sadly, we are still living through an era when management education has been subordinated to training, and management training programs emphasise managerial ‘style’ and techniques of manipulation and surveillance. “Foundations of Management Thought” is committed to the view that what managers need is an enduring set of principles - philosophical principles of knowledge, noble rhetoric, ethics and aesthetics, which have been the backbone of classical education for over 2000 years. It is encouraging to hear students tell me that they are discovering new insights from old books and that the classical writers said more than modern management authors, and they said it better.

It has to be admitted that in teaching this course there is no attempt to tell managers what to do, or to measure them. There are no personality, motivational or leadership questionnaires, no four quadrant diagrams, no business case studies or syndicate sessions, no endorsement of any current management fads and no deference to management gurus.

From Homer students learn what management by performance would truly mean if applied according to the worldview of the “Iliad”. Plato teaches that the wise, rather than the warriors, should rule and that wisdom is secured by rational thinking achieved through education. Machiavelli teaches the importance of knowing the inward resources of our own nature and acting to promote civic glory. From Descartes students wrestle with the problem of the mind and the body and how they interact, giving rise to modern dilemmas about mental illness and occupational stress.

After all if there is no mind, as Nietzsche and Sartre believed, there can be no mental illness. Hume teaches us that the science he was committed to is flawed and is no more rational than the superstitions he attacked. From Marx comes the view that capitalist society contains fundamental contradictions which will move it inexorably toward communism. Schopenhauer teaches us that cultural heroes do not have to be warriors, philosophers, priests or scientists, but can be artists, like Beethoven. Nietzsche warns of the decline of standards and the dominance of relativism – a view which has become popular in our postmodern, nihilistic world, which he predicted with uncanny accuracy. Freud tells us that we are not masters in our own house but victims of unconscious forces over which we have little control. Sartre disagrees vehemently and argues that, since we are human, we are free and responsible for the choices we make in our lives. To believe Freud is, therefore, to be in bad faith.

My own informal research shows that the students’ favourites are: Sartre, Nietzsche and Machiavelli, which is hardly surprising since Sartre emphasises responsible freedom, Nietzsche promotes heroic individualism and Machiavelli offers a realistic alternative to the Human Resource movement in that he assumes that power (rather than getting on with each other) is the most important concept in politics and that political rulers must know how to enter into evil when necessity commands. Whether our managers
would, or should, enter into evil is another matter, and much discussed in the seminars.

MGSM’s market research shows that “Foundations of Management Thought” is the best remembered and most discussed course in the MBA program, which is not to suggest that all memories and discussions are positive. Some students cannot see its relevance and wonder why it is a compulsory subject. Others begin by disliking the experience of engaging with philosophers, only to find ‘the penny drops’ during, or even years after, the course. It has also been said (justly) that the course drives more people out of management than any other in the Macquarie MBA program.

In 2003, a Macquarie MBA graduate, Louise O’Halloran, kindly asked me to deliver ten lectures to the Art Gallery Society of NSW. The prospect of talking philosophy on cozy winter afternoons to about 40 people appealed to me, and I readily accepted. The series of lectures – “The Mind’s Eye” – was intended as an introduction to philosophy and a gentle journey through Western intellectual history. We were totally unprepared for the response to our modest brochure. Nearly 600 people attended each lecture with an enthusiasm and dedication to critical thinking that amazed us. I delivered ten different lectures in 2004 to a similar audience. And a series of ten lectures on psychology – “Questionable Behaviour” – starts in August 2005.

Writing in Look, the Art Gallery Society’s magazine, Louise told her readers that “The Mind’s Eye” focuses on the lives and thoughts of the great philosophers, but what became apparent over the sessions is the revisiting of the eternal themes such as rationalism, idealism, objectivity, romanticism, empiricism, existentialism, liberalism, naturalism, truth, virtue, heroism and many more. In using these themes as an anchor of understanding, Professor Spillane demonstrates the way that these grand narratives ebb and flow through the centuries, appearing and re-appearing, complementing and conflicting with each other.

Philosophy brings these themes into our everyday lives and reveals itself to be far more than an arid academic exercise. To conclude with Louise’s wonderful words: “It is a tremendously useful and enlightening body of knowledge which gives rise to small truths about the ways of the world, the meaning of life and the vagaries of human existence. Thank goodness someone’s thinking about those things!”

Recent debate on the state of the humanities in Australia has created a misleading impression of conflict and gloom. Some commentators bemoan what they perceive to be the capture of the humanities by overly instrumentalist interests. Others bewail the rise of new disciplines or interdisciplinary practices, perceiving them to be threats to older forms of knowledge, to standards of quality, or to civilisation as we know it. But these dismal views are not borne out by a close look at how the humanities are faring at the opening of the twenty-first century. In fact, the disciplines are in good shape internally right across the board, and their capacity to contribute to our economic and social benefit is increasingly being recognised by industry, policy-makers and politicians alike. Rather than get involved in a border skirmish over a false division between streams of humanities work, then, I would prefer to outline the problems we actually do face, and then illustrate the reasons for my optimism.

There is no doubt that the humanities are still vastly under-resourced and often first against the wall when it is time to make cuts – a surprising and illogical tendency, considering how highly subscribed humanities subjects are by students, and how highly regarded by employers the skills they impart.

There is no doubt that the humanities are still vastly under-resourced and often first against the wall when it is time to make cuts – a surprising and illogical tendency, considering how highly subscribed humanities subjects are by students, and how highly regarded by employers the skills they impart. The fact that we achieve a lot on much less funding than many other fields should count for us, but more often
becomes a perverse liability. We are also often frustrated by the way that our work – by virtue of its very connectedness to people’s lives – can seem to be invisible to policymakers and the public, while an arcane science – through its very weirdness – may be identified as expert work requiring respect and resources.

If we have had trouble breaking through in recent years, it may be the product of a simplistic focus upon technology as the universal solvent of all our problems, manifest in the use of the limited English word ‘science’ to capture the much broader concept of research.

This antiquated perspective is as unfair and unhelpful to the science sector as much as it is to the rest of the research community: it is hardly the fault of science that it cannot solve everything when fully half of the disciplines essential to a comprehensive view of the world are left out of the problem-solving effort. We have long known the science of salinity, for instance. What is required for a breakthrough is knowing how to influence human behaviour: political and economic behaviour, public and private, corporate and individual. Gene technology is a fascinating and rapidly advancing field of science, but a serious investment in the fields that will help us understand the impact on people in social, ethical and political terms is essential if this science is to be of benefit to us all.

Fortunately, though, the community apprehension of the importance of the humanities has never disappeared, and a renewed visibility of the humanities is beginning to make more evident the fundamental role our disciplines have played all along. There is a rapidly increasing recognition across the board, from the universities to our parliament houses, that the humanities are essential to the conduct of productive, practical and socially engaged research. This means that the work done to tackle our big problems – from salinity to national security, from childhood obesity to literacy standards – all require contributions from humanists, social scientists and creative artists, as well as from scientists, engineers and technologists.

We in Australia are just starting to join in an international awareness that future prosperity and wellbeing involves the industries, study and diffusion of cultural knowledge. We have been slow off the mark, but we have strong residual capacity and a hell of a lot of talent to draw upon to ensure we catch up. The humanities in Australia are certainly coming off a low base, but the trend is now pointing in the right direction. Just as important as the receipt of outside support and recognition, however, is the way that the humanities are continuing to revitalise themselves from within.

New fields have been opened up and new methodologies developed that complement the more established disciplines and their proven practices. This has led to a revival of cross-disciplinary work within the humanities that has charged the range of human disciplines with vigour and vitality. And while the humanities have been marginalised in recent years, there is every indication that the disciplines of culture and society are mounting a comeback.

A great example of the contribution we can – must-make is the problem of youth motor vehicle accident rates. There is always scope for technological solutions to road safety questions, from fields as diverse as civil engineering to materials technology, but we all know that the improvement of greatest impact to the road toll would be to significantly change driver behaviour, particularly in the youth demographic. Physics and chemistry, important as they are to understanding the physical world, will not tell us how to make people slow down, to adapt to road conditions, and to watch out for running children instead of tuning the stereo. It is fields such as sociology, cultural studies and media analysis that will help us to understand how culture influences driving behaviour, and how those influences can be directed to create safer driving environments. A study being conducted by cultural studies researchers at the University of Western Sydney, funded by the Australian Research Council and conducted in partnership with the NRMA, is making a difference to young people’s attitudes towards road safety that is aimed at reducing the road toll, initially in Sydney’s west but ultimately for application around Australia and abroad.

Another humanities study is looking at attitudes towards water use in established and developing communities in Australia. While the science of sustainable water policy is absolutely crucial to our future on this continent, we will not achieve a balance with our increasingly stressed environment without changing the way we use and dispose of water, as individuals, as industries and as communities. The study has aroused a lot of interest from governments, water utilities, property developers and environmental groups for its ability to cut through the cant and theorising to discover real-life influences upon water usage, which will enable the development of practical reduction and re-use measures.

So the humanities are well placed to join with science and technology to solve the problems that beset us today and that we forecast for tomorrow.
innovation are fundamental to extending and exploiting our national advantage in the field.

One such initiative is the Australian Creative Innovation System, a proposed ARC Centre of Excellence harnessing an impressive multidisciplinary array of talent across a broad consortium in academia, industry and government, led by researchers at Queensland University of Technology. If it gets the green light, this Centre will explore regulatory, technical and creative issues in order to develop new ways of harnessing a global advantage that is yet to be fully realised. The benefits of turning Australia from a net importer to a leading exporter of digital content and platform development are obvious.

It is not only in collaboration with other fields, or in contribution to other industries that the humanities have their part to play, however. Like many science pursuits, they have a fascinating curiosity-driven part to play in enriching our cultural knowledge-store. The plethora of television shows on history, archaeology, art, literature, foreign cultures – all are products of fundamental humanities research and communication. People love this stuff. The humanities are no more in need of a narrow instrumentalist justification than are football or winemaking – they give a vast number of people great satisfaction and delight, and contribute significantly to the experience of living well as a member of this amazing human culture we have created in the last few dozen millennia.

As one prominent policy-maker recently put it, the humanities’ time has come. The overdue recognition of the contributions that our disciplines are able to make coincides with the emergence of many more opportunities for making them. 2005 is shaping up to be the year of engagement for the humanities, and there has never been a better time for teachers, scholars and researchers in all of our disciplines to participate in the great conversation that is Australian society.

The new engagement with the humanities across the research and education sector and in policy settings is fundamental to our future. There is a long way to go, but it seems to me that we are starting to get ourselves on the right track. Policy makers, politicians and academics are finally figuring out what the general public has known all along: that the people factors are crucial to whatever we do. Without a proper understanding of people, everything is just left to the machines – and all know how that movie ends.

One crucial element separates the humanities from the sciences: it is the idea of values. Good science is largely values-neutral. The scientific method does not readily admit an overlay of values. Many scientists recognise that their discoveries may have good or bad consequences, but take the view that the application of those discoveries lies outside the realm of science. This explains in part why science throws up such challenging moral problems: nuclear energy and genetic manipulation are obvious examples. It also explains why the relations between religion and science have been so fraught for so long: they each have an oar in the same boat, but science is unsentimentally concerned with proof.

By contrast, the humanities are bound in values. Since the humanities do not (at least for the most part) restrict themselves only to demonstrable facts; value judgment and normative assessment are embedded in humanist studies. Any field which is speculative, or fairly open to subjective assessment, cannot escape a values-bias. The vigorous public debate about the course of white settlement in Australia demonstrated how widely different conclusions can be drawn from the same body of available evidence.

The ‘problem’ with values is that they do not yield to the scientific method. No value system can be proved right or wrong by reference to any agreed external standard. Even Utilitarianism, with its spurious mathematical precision, turns out in all but the most trivial cases to depend crucially on subjective evaluation, so that the ultimate result depends on unarticulated normative assessment. Utilitarianism provides an apparently easy answer if the question is whether one life should be sacrificed to achieve the certain rescue of 100 lives. It is less useful if the question is whether a child should be tortured in order to obtain information which might (but might not) save a life, or a hundred lives.

Whether we like it or not, all societies are based on values. Sometimes those values are codified in the dominant religion, sometimes they can be inferred from social structures and conventions, or from the content of the laws which govern the society. The basic values in any society are the product of the humanities, not science. Basic values are given expression in the structures and systems of government, and in legal principles and rules. Social institutions such as
universal suffrage or unemployment relief say something of a society's values. Principles such as the right to life, the rule of law and the separation of powers articulate values which are basic to modern Western democracies but are not universal or timeless. Those principles were formulated in England during the reign of the Stuart kings in 17th century England. The century opened with the brutal repression of the Roman Catholics which was re-doubled in reaction to the desperate foolishness of the Gunpowder treason (1605). The measures taken against Roman Catholics offend every notion of justice and decency, but were justified by the danger presented by 'Popery'. The 17th century ended with the Salem Witch trials (1692) in America, when a different sort of hysteria also resulted in a perversion of the justice system. Each of these events and many others were significant influences in the formation of the principles we now regard as basic to democracy. In 17th century England and America, the great struggle was to constrain the executive power, and it is no accident that the separation of powers had its first formal expression in the Constitution of the United States.

Until the Restoration, western societies proceeded on an assumption that a monarch had a right to rule which was derived from God. This was convenient for those who could trace their ancestry to Adam, or at least persuade others that they could do so. Their right to rule transcended argument or doubt. The English 17th century dawned in an age of divine right but closed with parliamentary rule firmly established. James I of England, enthroned in 1603, was a fervent proponent of the divine right of kings. His son Charles I was beheaded in 1649. His autocratic rule sparked the civil war after which, from 1688, his son Charles II was restored. The reign of the Tudors and of the Stuarts demonstrated the dangers of unconstrained executive power. It was against that background that the American colonists adopted a Constitution which provided for the separation of the powers of government: the legislative power, the executive power and the judicial power are each vested in the three arms of government, and no branch can exercise the power vested in another. The separation of powers, which is also embedded in the Australian Constitution, gives expression to the most basic value judgment, learned from bitter history: that government power needs to be constrained.

Other values are equally basic to our democratic system: no arrest without lawful authority (enforced by the ancient writ of habeas corpus); no arbitrary search and seizure; no prison except by authority of law; the assumption of innocence; criminal charges to be proved beyond reasonable doubt; no torture; an assumption (although not a legal right) of privacy. These values can all be traced to the terrible events in 17th century England and equivalent events elsewhere in Europe. Interestingly, most of those excesses were justified by reference to the supposed threat presented by unpopular religious beliefs.

It has long been recognized that these basic values, so hard won, are always at risk. In a speech in Boston on 28 January 1852 Wendell Phillips said:

Eternal vigilance is the price of liberty – power is ever stealing from the many to the few.... The hand entrusted with power becomes ... the necessary enemy of the people. Only by continual oversight can the democrat in office be prevented from hardening into a despot: only by unintermitted Agitation can a people be kept sufficiently awake to principle not to let liberty be smothered in material prosperity.

Recent years have seen this risk materialise: in Australia and elsewhere, there is a retreat from basic values. Pragmatism is emerging as a sufficient justification of measures which, until recently, would have been abhorrent. The dictates of pragmatism can be very appealing, especially to those (always the majority) who take the benefit. In the wake of
As a result, civil liberties in Australia have been significantly eroded. The erosion has been justified on pragmatic grounds: executive detention of asylum seekers in order to deter people smugglers; increased wire-tapping to combat crime; incommunicado detention and interrogation of people not suspected of any offence, but thought to have information about others. The erosion is accepted by the majority of citizens because they think the new laws will protect them and presumably they do not imagine that they will ever feel the sting of those laws.

The complacent majority has forgotten the dangers of untrammeled executive power. It is uncomfortable to recall that in Germany during the 1930s Jews were progressively stripped of the right to work in the public service; the right to bathe in public with Aryans; the right to be in public parks; the right to go to cinemas and theatres; the right to hold a drivers licence. All of these denials of rights were implemented lawfully and were enforced by properly constituted courts. They were effective in their purpose, so pragmatism might be said to justify them. But the existence of such measures offends us and the arguments against them are obvious. Should German citizens have spoken up sooner, or more forcefully? Where in that melancholy progression of events did the death camps become an acceptable possibility?

In Australia today innocent people are held in executive detention. They can be held for life if necessary. They are not suspected of, or charged with, any offence. Whilst in detention, they are regularly subjected to solitary confinement – not by order of a court, but at the discretion of the executive government, through its private contractor. Whilst in solitary confinement, they lose their “privileges” (such as the right to make phone calls, or receive visits or see friends or have a transistor radio). Those “privileges” are progressively restored if the detainee’s behaviour conforms to the requirements of the commercial operator of the camps. All of this is explained as necessary in order to “send a message to people smugglers”.

The ASIO legislation now permits the incommunicado detention for a week of people not suspected of any wrong-doing: it is enough if they are thought to have information about others who may have been involved in terrorist offences. The person may be taken into isolated custody, and will not have a free choice of legal help; they will not be permitted to tell friends or family where they are; they must answer questions, or face 5 years imprisonment; when released, they are not permitted to tell anyone where they were or what happened to them. These measures are difficult to reconcile with the values on which our democracy are founded.

Australia is still holding about 50 asylum seekers on the tiny Pacific Island of Nauru, isolated from the rest of the world. Those people (and the others before them who have now been accepted as refugees and have been resettled in New Zealand or Australia) have been held for years without charge or trial, without access to lawyers, without hope. They are there because our Navy intercepted them at sea and took them to Nauru against their will. This is still hailed by the Howard government as “the most effective deterrent of people smugglers”.

What justification can there be for such things? Should pragmatism ever be allowed to displace basic principles and values? In December 2004 the House of Lords decided a case concerning UK anti-terrorist laws which allow terror suspects to be held without trial indefinitely. By a majority of 8 to 1 they held that the law impermissibly breached the democratic right to liberty. Lord Hope said, “the right to liberty belongs to each and every individual”. Lord Hoffmann traced these rights to Magna Carta, and made the point that the struggle for democracy has long focused on the need to protect individual liberty against the might of executive government. Lord Nicholls said:

Indefinite imprisonment without charge or trial is anathema in any country which observes the rule of law. It deprives the detained person of the protection a criminal trial is intended to afford. Wholly exceptional circumstances must exist before this extreme step can be justified.

Lord Hoffmann said:

The real threat to the life of the nation ... comes not from terrorism but from laws such as these.

How much more forcefully those words apply when the person held in executive detention is not suspected of any offence at all.

The humanities are the domain in which we can find the sources of our values, and the tools with which those values can be understood and explained. They provide us with the pathology of Society.

The humanities are the domain in which we can find the sources of our values, and the tools with which those values can be understood and explained. They provide us with the pathology of Society. In particular, history contains important warnings which should guide our steps. A basic appreciation of history shows that the freedoms which are the foundation of our Society can be compromised if any of three conditions are satisfied:

• When effective opposition is absent, or so weak or compliant as to enable Government to ignore electoral retribution. This is the position in totalitarian regimes. It was briefly the position in Victoria a few years ago. It has been the position in Federal parliament since 2001;

• When the freedoms in issue are those of the politically irrelevant: the disenfranchised or the voiceless.

• In times of war or civil emergency, when the people cede to Government greater than usual powers in order to meet more effectively a collective threat.
The humanities are inescapably bound to values that they are so important to society, especially at this point in our history. Life is about more than pragmatics and the bottom line: there are values which cannot be rationally explained, but which are nonetheless real: music, art, literature, religious and philosophical beliefs: all of these things are recognised as inherently valuable even if they cannot be explained or justified in rational terms.

Just as humanist values are important for individuals, so they are for businesses. It is a curious thing that business enterprises are a major element in our society, they are crucial to, but also dependent on, the rest of society. Yet many businesses regard humanist values as having no relevance to them. This is clearly apparent in arts funding. Most businesses do not offer philanthropic support for the arts: at best they offer commercial sponsorship which is predicated on the calculation that each dollar of sponsorship will return at least a dollar's worth of commercial value.

Likewise, many businesses do not regard themselves as bound by ordinary moral values: winning at all cost is OK; making landmines is profitable; capitalising on aggressive war is good business... These are attitudes which can be seen in very large, successful and respectable businesses. The same attitudes in an individual would result in social ostracism. A parallel message is also given out by the conduct of governments.

It is time for the humanities to fight back. Business is an integral part of the structure of the society in which it functions. It creates its own adherence to values which influence those of the society on which it depends. When business acts badly, society takes its cues from this increasingly influential guide to modern life. However business stands to suffer the consequences as much as the rest of society.

Just as importantly, however, business has an obligation to engage in social questions, because when business stands by, or profits from unfair social practices, it is part of the society that is degraded as a result. Just as pollution ultimately damages even the polluter, so does a fall in values ultimately damage the business community because it is part of the wider community. It is in the interests of business to ensure that the society it shares and serves is healthy – both economically and in its values.

A humanities education can enrich the boardroom with far more than refined tastes or a competitively advantageous appreciation of history: it must transform the boardroom with a deep understanding of the value of values, for the better health of our entire society.

Wendell Phillips’ sentiment, that “Eternal vigilance is the price of liberty” resonates today because we recognise, even if dimly, that governments can and do betray our values. History is littered with examples. Unfortunately the lessons of history are too easily forgotten, or swept aside, at times of real or imagined emergency.

The other week I had lunch with an old friend and posed the question that I seem to be asking a lot lately, to myself as much as to others. “Now that retirement looms, what are your plans?”

My companion that day is the CFO of a large national organisation. He works hard and plays hard, so my curiosity was high. Peter’s reply was immediate and rapid fire, typical of him:

For starters I want to revive my study of French. I wasn’t bad at school, but have done little since. So I’ll plunge in and see how it goes. Same with the piano – I’m as rusty as an old nail and really hope it’s not too late to get up to a passable standard. I’m dead keen to travel in Europe while we’re healthy enough to go for extended periods, especially to France and Italy. As you know I’m a fanatic when it comes to French impressionism and Italian renaissance painting and I want to see all that I can of the major works. Not only in Italy and France but wherever they are. At home I’m building up a pretty good collection of 19th century Australian photographs, and will probably add to it. Last, I’ve started work on a family history and thought I could combine it with a history of the little town in Victoria where we grew up as kids. There’s quite a bit by way of historical records scattered about, so I think it’s possible.

(Gasp!) I can only hope Peter’s heart holds up alongside his bank balance. His shrewd investments over many years clearly promise him a comfortable life. “Go your hardest”, I remarked. “If only half of this comes off, you’ll have a great time.”

When John Byron asked me to write about why it’s not all that difficult to demonstrate the relevance of the humanities to the way we live – or want to live – our lives. Interpreting the past, making some sense of the present, and shaping our future – a glance at any newspaper or TV newscast throws up as much humanities material as, say, science or medicine.
Australian business should support the humanities, I was reluctant to get on my well-used soap box and preach a sermon. I’m doing that a lot lately as I go around with my begging bowl, and suspect I would have lost you, dear reader, by now. But you might have guessed by now where I’m headed. It’s not all that difficult to demonstrate the relevance of the humanities to the way we live – or want to live – our lives. Interpreting the past, making some sense of the present, and shaping our future – a glance at any newspaper or TV newscast throws up as much humanities material as, say, science or medicine. It’s something of a leap to insist that the corporate sector might support the humanities in the name of the national interest. I agree with those who have said that corporate responsibility to shareholders includes responsibility to shareholders ‘in perpetuity’. I’m mightily attracted to the point. Building up positive futures for potential shareholders and their families is an irresistible idea to me. But I’ll put it aside for now.

The way I want to go here is to think of personal, individual benefit. This is not to push for naked self-interest over everything else, but just for a moment to shift the focus from possibly vague notions of social benefit towards ways that the humanities can touch us at deeply personal levels. I know that it is usually at times of personal crisis that we dare to open up questions of personal satisfaction and emotional health, and looming retirement can be just that kind of crisis! But such times, retirement included, force us to ponder the things we value the most and the pathways we take to secure them.

In Peter’s case, there is much that he wants to pursue that can be self-funded – his French and music lessons, for instance. There is also much that groups of his like-minded retirees can achieve – like paying for tourist infrastructure as travelers. But there is still a lot that Peter wants to do that evades his capacity and the capacity of like-minded and affluent persons to provide for.

To start with, Peter will presumably want some assurance about the quality of his French and piano teachers. There are presumably a lot of French speakers and pianists about the place who’d give teaching a go. But I for one would want my precious retirement monies to go to teachers I could rely on to whip me into shape with guaranteed competence. Part of our cultural infrastructure as a nation has to include the training of competent linguists and musicians and the training of some of them as teachers. It’s not an area that has been or can be fully privatised – a degree of social subsidy or underwriting inevitably remains. Not to mention supporting how musicians keep their interpretations fresh or linguists keep up with changes in colloquial expression. I for one don’t want to be taught to speak like Molière. And I’d want my tutors to have a state-of-the-art grasp of new technologies.

Think of Peter’s travel plans. Wherever they might take him, the infrastructure that attracts him is far beyond the capacity of tourist dollars to maintain. Clean beaches, restored cathedrals, galleries, historic city precincts and fragile historic sites are of great tourist appeal, but require considerable outlays that outstrip the direct and indirect income derived from tourism.

Think too of the historical tangibles that attract Peter – notably the magnificent paintings that sum up the French impressionist and Italian renaissance schools. It is one thing to ponder who has acquired them, how, and with whose financing. It is another thing to think of how they are preserved, and housed and displayed safely. Conservation of such works is hugely expensive, requiring considerable technical skill, organisation and infrastructure. On the surface, the block buster exhibitions and the crowd pulling Mona Lisas are critical for attracting the tourist dollar and private finance. But the necessary infrastructure and processes far exceed what is possible and likely in this regard, opening up again the old question of how we transcend user pays principles with blends of public and private support.

Similarly, as Peter expands his collection of original photographs, and tackles his family and local histories, he will inevitably draw upon resources that he cannot possibly be responsible for providing, even if he wished to.

**Attachments value to things is hard enough at a private, individualised level. At a social level, it is maddeningly complex – much of day-to-day politics is about reconciling competing claims over what we should more highly value.**

Attaching value to things is hard enough at a private, individualised level. At a social level, it is maddeningly complex – much of day-to-day politics is about reconciling competing claims over what we should more highly value. If user pays and taxpayer financing is insufficient for providing what ‘we’ value, then questions inevitably arise about alternatives. It would be in Peter’s self-interest if his interests were amply supported through a combination of user pays, public funding and private support.

I know that my friend Peter is not alone in planning this kind of retirement. The world of books, cinema, music live and recorded, the visual arts, the study of foreign languages and cultures, appreciation of the natural environment – all and much more take their place when we determine what is really important in a life without work – a life with our partner, our grandchildren, our friends. The examples in this article are admittedly drawn from ‘high culture’ – but the point is the same whatever pursuits occupy one’s leisure time. Services in the creative and leisure industries make up a large and rapidly expanding part of national GDP. Not only is there a lot of money to be made in them, there is an ongoing need to ensure that the necessary infrastructure is there to support and sustain them.

There is a multitude of ways in which business can capitalise on opportunities that arise from the humanities. But the happiness of employees, shareholders and their families – in perpetuity – might also require more generalised investments in the necessary infrastructure for the humanities. Much is possible in terms of partnerships with those dedicated to apply the humanities to improved quality of life, whether in terms that address physical or emotional health, material and personal security, environmental quality, and opportunities on a broad range of fronts to add value to the quality of life.
In June 2004, Dr Brendan Nelson announced that he would fund a report into the commercial activity of researchers working in the humanities, arts and social sciences in the tertiary sector.

He was speaking at the launch of a new advocacy group for the sector, the Council for the Humanities, Arts and Social Sciences (CHASS).

This was to be the first of a series of projects, the Minister for Education, Science and Training told a breakfast meeting organised by the new group. It was to be the first of a series of commissioned research projects to inform the policy-making process in relation to the humanities, arts and social sciences (or HASS).

In his announcement, the Minister said:

The Council for Humanities, Arts and Social Sciences has argued that the contribution of the humanities, arts and social sciences to Australian commercial activity and to Australian business is under-recognised.

I have therefore asked the Council to review the many avenues pursued by researchers in the humanities, arts and social sciences to commercialise their work – including publishing, performance, licensing, and industry collaboration – and to identify specific examples of commercial impact.

The study will involve a series of focus groups of researchers leading to a description of the commercial activities of the sector, an understanding of the incentives and impediments to commercial engagement and recommendations for changes to Government policy or new programmes likely to encourage commercial activity...

Knowledge is important but arguably of greater importance is how we adapt to new knowledge and understand its applications. This is why Humanities, Arts and Social Sciences are so important.

(Ministerial media release 29/06/04)

The broad purpose behind the research projects is to build a greater understanding of the HASS sector, generate ideas to inform the policy debate, and improve the capacity of researchers in the humanities, arts, and social sciences to contribute to Australian innovation.

The first report, the one into commercialisation, was launched in May 2005. It describes the commercial activities and examines the impediments and incentives facing humanities, arts and social sciences researchers and educators at the tertiary level in Australia. It is a snapshot of who is commercialising and how they approach this task, based on the findings of focus groups and questionnaires.

The outputs and products of researchers in the HASS sector take on a number of different shapes, and it needed a broad definition of “commercial” to capture the true value of this work. There is a growing appreciation, for instance, of the tangible returns offered by HASS research carried out as part of a community engagement agenda. In addition to the immediate financial returns, commercialisation adds to human or social capital (and its returns) and generates partnerships which make future commercialisation possible. Commercialisation is an investment, not just an outcome.

For the purpose of the study ‘commercial’ was defined as work which:

• has a market value – someone is willing to pay for it or to see it, and/or the intellectual property it represents
• is useful – it has a potential or realised application
• may involve a partner from ‘industry’ (any group which might apply the results of the work, such as a government department, non-profit organisation, corporation or other commercial partner)

This definition was deliberately broad, and led to discussion in some focus groups on how commercialisation is currently defined. There was resistance by some participants to a narrow and literal definition of the word ‘commercial’. Many participants were more comfortable with the notion of ‘utility’, that the work was useful and therefore had a value. For some participants, the word ‘commercialisation’ had negative connotations:

“I don’t find the commercialisation word dirty – but I have trouble using it with other people. I tend not to use it as it has negative connotation when attached to an art event like ours.” (Newcastle)

The report contains several case studies. These stories illustrate the tangible contribution and impact of the HASS sector in cultural, social and economic terms. The processes and benefits they set out are replicated a thousand times over in the humanities, arts and social sciences in Australia.

Services, such as research consultancy and contracting, are the most common form of commercialisation amongst HASS researchers and practitioners, particularly in the area of government policy advice. State or Federal government departments and agencies are the most frequently-cited clients of the HASS sector. The sciences, by contrast, worked on solutions to environmental and industry problems and creating new commercial opportunities.

The humanities, arts and social sciences constitute a broad and diverse field. Different disciplines face different issues in the process of commercialisation.
The humanities, arts and social sciences constitute a broad and diverse field. Different disciplines face different issues in the process of commercialisation. Many of these issues apply across the board, but there are significant variations between disciplines in the sorts of commercialisation opportunities that they can pursue and the levels of financial reward they can generate. For example, the commercial possibilities, market arrangements and standards of practice in providing economic consulting or psychological counselling services are very different from those in the creative arts. Large tenders and grants are often available for research in the social sciences and education faculties, compared with the smaller grants more generally offered in the arts.

The benefits of commercialisation are seen as wide and varied. Commercial work enables researchers to improve their teaching and research as it gives them a better understanding of the needs of industry. It provides students with industry exposure and research experience, a valued part of their training. It can lead to a higher profile and enhanced promotional prospects, as well as improving business and negotiation skills.

In addition, the economic rewards are also important, allowing departments and faculties to fund research units, to expand and hire more staff, and to send their researchers to conferences. In some cases it affords people flexibility within a tightly-ordered university structure.

For many HASS researchers and educators, money is not the driving factor in the commercialisation of their work, nor are they comfortable with the idea that commercial transactions should govern the nature of their research activities. They are attracted to the idea of being relevant, influential and connected to their communities. Commercial activities allow them to become engaged with the community by helping solve important social and community problems.

As one participant said:

“I like words like ‘relevance’ and ‘social relevance’ – I find myself pulling back from ‘commercial’ as this implies a specific definition of relevance. There is a risk that if we fall into one understanding of it [commercialisation] then we lose others.”

(Townsville)

Regional universities, in particular, believe they have a special mandate to support communities. Some HASS researchers believe that they should be adequately funded to provide community research and services free of charge.

Much of the focus group discussion revolved around the challenges and impediments to commercialisation. Such challenges included dealing with unresponsive and ill-equipped university systems, trying to find the time and resources for commercial engagements, and coping with funding programs which rewarded only a narrow band of activities. Respondents said that while the most productive research often came from multi-disciplinary and multi-institutional collaborations, these are not encouraged by existing systems.

They reported that possible sources of funding from the private sector were cut off because the Income Tax Assessment Act specifically excludes research in the humanities, arts and social science from the R&D tax concession. Respondents also cited their own lack of business skills as a compounding factor.

The attitudes of university administrators, department or faculty heads, individual researchers and their peers are also seen as very important. The expansion of commercial opportunities is dependent on the existence of a research culture which recognises and rewards the sort of partnered commercial research already being undertaken in the HASS sectors.

Information was gathered through two main strategies: focus groups and an on-line questionnaire.

The focus groups discussed broad issues relating to the commercialisation of humanities, arts, and social science research. People were recruited from the sector across a range of disciplines and institutions to talk about their experiences in commercial activities. An average of eight people participated in each focus group.

The on-line questionnaire allowed people not able to attend the focus groups to provide input into the study. The structure of the questionnaire reflected the areas covered in the focus group discussions, but also encouraged unfettered narrative responses from researchers.

The study was advertised through CHASS networks: the 99 organisations which had at that time joined CHASS; the 400 subscribers to the CHASS newsletter; and the 180 people who attended the national launch of CHASS in June 2004 in Canberra. People were invited to register their interest by completing a form on the CHASS web site, and this information formed the basis of a working database for the study.

At the time of going to press, the recommendations from the report are still being finalised. But even at this stage, it is clear from both the focus group discussions and the responses to the on-line questionnaires, that there are a number of fronts on which action can be taken.

There are suggestions for everyone engaged in these activities, from individual researchers, to those responsible for commercialisation programs and for framing protocols for promotion in the tertiary sector. Researchers claimed they did not have the skills or knowledge to work through commercial arrangements, and that they were not afforded the time within the system to acquire these new skills.

Researchers need to be trained and supported them, and offered rewards within the system for commercial activities.

Based on the suggestions of the study participants, recommendations are made across three broad areas:

- improvement of university practices to make them more encouraging and supportive of commercial activities;
- changes to government settings to recognise and reward HASS commercial activities; and
- development of new programs to equip people working in the humanities, arts and social sciences with the skills to handle commercial engagements.

The report was written by Jenni Metcalfe, the principal of a Brisbane-based consultancy firm called Econnect, and Toss Gascoigne of CHASS. Minister Nelson launched the full report at Parliament House in May 2005. A full copy is available on the CHASS website (www.chass.org.au).
In the Jan 2005 issue of Company Director, the official journal of the Australian Institute of Company Directors, in an article on Corporate Governance, the comment was made, ‘We need to widen the pool of directors…. to include women, government, academics, HR people, industrial relations, communications and IT.’

This view reinforces the recent initiative of B-HERT to launch the B-HERT Directors Register.

Companies are constantly seeking to widen their pool of non-executive directors, to diversify the collective talent around the board table, and to go outside the normal pool of likely candidates. It is frequently remarked that there is a shortage of quality directors in Australia.

Companies could gain valuable expertise by tapping into the university and research sectors.

There is probably not a single university governing body in Australia which does not include at least one business person. Generally there will be several. Conversely, there are very few corporate boards which include academics, scientists, or researchers.

Many companies, at board level, could profit from having a greater understanding of the true potential of the latest developments in science or technology.

It has become evident in recent times that most companies do not understand or appreciate the competitive value of their intellectual property. There are a couple of outstanding examples in Australia of companies who do realise and are devoting considerable resources to effectively exploiting their IP.

B-HERT has established a register of those from universities and research organizations (CSIRO, DSTO, ANSTO, and medical research institutes) who are interested in becoming non-executive directors on company boards. Companies are able to access this register and follow-up with individuals whom they see as potentially suitable. We have procedures to protect the privacy of those who put their names on the register.

In addition to the organizations mentioned above the register also includes members from Engineers Australia and the Australian Computer Society, both organizations being Members of B-HERT.

The Register is open (free of charge) to companies, members and search firms who are seeking board members. These organisations do not get direct access to the Register. They specify to B-HERT the characteristics of the person they are looking for and B-HERT then searches the register for suitable people. B-HERT then communicates this to the company or search firm and B-HERT plays no further role in the matter.

For those employed by B-HERT Members, for an annual fee of $50 plus GST, interested persons can register their profile, including details of current and past experience, with B-HERT. For those employed by organizations who are not members of B-HERT, the annual fee is $75 (plus GST).

The Register is an Internet based service which gives individuals complete control over their profile. Profiles can be updated at any time by accessing the register using individual passwords. Registrants can also easily remove their profile from the Register.

Visit www.bhert.com

Companies are constantly seeking to widen their pool of non-executive directors, to diversify the collective talent around the board table, and to go outside the normal pool of likely candidates. It is frequently remarked that there is a shortage of quality directors in Australia.
2005 Awards

for

Outstanding Achievement in Collaboration in Research & Development and Education & Training

Purpose
A program of prestigious awards initiated in 1998 to recognise outstanding achievements in collaboration between business and higher education in the fields of Research & Development and Education & Training. The objective of the program is to highlight at a national level the benefits of such collaboration, and enhance links between industry and universities.

Frequency
Awards are made annually and presented at the B-HERT Awards dinner in November each year.

Eligibility
The award is made to a program or project involving a collaborative partnership between business and higher education. Therefore, the collaborating organisations nominated for the award must come from business and from higher education.

Each submission must be signed by all participating partners.

Number and categories of Awards
This year’s Awards are for-
• Best R&D Collaboration
• Best E&T Collaboration
• Best Collaboration involving a CRC – R&D or E&T
• Best International Collaboration – R&D or E&T
• Best Collaboration with a Regional Focus – R&D or E&T

Applications may be submitted for an Award in one or more categories. However, no application can win more than one Award. Non successful applicants are eligible to apply for an Award in a later year.

B-HERT wishes to acknowledge the generous support of the following organisations:

Criteria for Assessment
1. Innovation – has the project or program produced new products or services; how innovative is it in its concept or idea, design, delivery or content; what new barriers has it surmounted; what new challenges has it identified?

2. Strength of Relationship – (a) what is the extent of involvement of the partners? (b) how has this grown over the life of the project or program? (c) how do the partners work together in a productive partnership? (d) are there obstacles and barriers the partners have had to overcome to make the collaboration work? (e) what other spin-offs have there been from the project or program for participating organisations?

3. Outreach Inclusion – has the project or program attracted new participants since its inception; has it become a model for other projects or programs?

4. National Benefits – these may be economic, financial, social, educational or community benefits: may include for example, growth in exports, creation of new jobs, outreach and provision of services to new community sectors and participants, and so on.

5. Cultural Impact – what impact has the project or program had on the cultures of the participating organisations? What changes have occurred in what is done and the way it is done in the participating organisations? What changes have there been in attitudes, behaviour or values in the participants?
Process
1. Applications for 2005 are now being sought from all Members of B-HERT.
2. Deadline for applications is 30 August 2005.
4. Judging panel:
   • Professor Leon Mann, Professorial Fellow, School of Behavioural Science, University of Melbourne (Chairman)
   • Dr Annabelle Duncan, Former Chief of Division, Molecular Science, CSIRO
   • Dr Bob Frater AO, Vice-President for Innovation, ResMed Ltd
   • Mr Peter Laver AM, Chairman, Australian Building Codes Board and Vice President, Australian Academy of Technological Sciences and Engineering
   • Dr Jane Munro, Head of College & CEO, International House, University of Melbourne
5. Awards will be presented by the Hon Dr Brendan Nelson MP, Minister for Education, Science and Training at the B-HERT Awards Dinner on 22 November 2005 in Sydney.
6. The winner in each category will be presented with an Award at the Dinner.
7. Applications to be no more than one page on each of the five criteria.
8. Completed applications to be sent to:
   Business/Higher Education Round Table
   1st Floor, 24 Brunswick Street, Fitzroy Vic 3065

2005 Award for

The Best Entrepreneurial Educator of the Year

MAJOR SPONSOR

B-HERT is delighted to announce for the fifth successive year that the major sponsor of the Best Entrepreneurial Educator of the Year Award for 2005 is the Australian Technology Network

Curtin University of Technology
University of South Australia
RMIT University
University of Technology Sydney
Queensland University of Technology

Criteria for Assessment
1. Effective involvement of industry in the design, implementation and evaluation of entrepreneurial educational activities.
2. Encouragement of students in the practice of entrepreneurship.
3. Is the educator’s work a model for others?
4. Demonstrable outcomes of the educator’s work – development by students of new products, processes or services.
5. Has the educator’s work made a difference to the attitudes, self esteem, behaviour, life chances, values and employment outcomes of their students?

Application form can be found at www.bhert.com
Process
1. Applications for 2005 are now being sought from all eligible applicants. Applications may be submitted by the nominee personally, or by a third party on their behalf (with the nominee’s consent).
2. Deadline for applications is **4 October 2005**.
3. Judging panel will be chosen from the Board of Directors of the Business/Higher Education Round Table:
   - Mr Rob Stewart, President, Business/Higher Education Round Table
   - Professor Denise Bradley AO, Vice-Chancellor, University of South Australia
   - Professor Peter Coaldrake, Vice-Chancellor, Queensland University of Technology
   - Professor Kerry Cox, Vice-Chancellor, University of Ballarat
   - Professor Gavin Brown, Vice-Chancellor, University of Sydney
   - Professor Helen Garnett, Vice-Chancellor, Charles Darwin University
   - Ms Leanne Hardwicke, Director Public Policy & Representation, Engineers Australia
   - Mr David Hind, Managing Director –South Pacific, BOC Gases Australia Limited
   - Mr Richard Hogg, Immediate Past President, Australian Computer Society
   - Professor Millicent Poole, Vice-Chancellor, Edith Cowan University
   - Mr John Russell, Managing Director, Russell Mineral Equipment Pty Ltd
   - Professor Peter Sheehan AO, Vice-Chancellor, Australian Catholic University
   - Professor Ian Young, Vice-Chancellor, Swinburne University of Technology
   - Professor Di Yerbury AO, Vice-Chancellor, Macquarie University
4. The Award will be presented by the Hon Dr Brendan Nelson MP, Minister for Education, Science and Training at the B-HERT Awards Dinner on **22 November 2005** in Sydney, along with the Awards for Outstanding Achievement in Collaboration in Education and Training and Collaborative R&D.
5. Submission to be no more than one page of each of the five criteria.
6. Completed submissions to be sent to the Business/Higher Education Round Table at the following address:
   - 1st Floor, 24 Brunswick Street
   - Fitzroy Vic 3065
   - Ph: +61 3 9419 8068
   - Fax: +61 3 9419 8276
   - E-mail: bhert@bhert.com
   - Application form can be found at www.bhert.com

At the 2005 Campbell Arnott’s SIFE Australia National Competition held on 9 & 10 July at the Sydney Convention & Exhibition Centre, Darling Harbour, a team of Engineering students from the Mawson Lakes Campus of the University of South Australia were named the 2005 Qantas SIFE Australia National Champion Team.

The SIFE UniSA project portfolio is an inspirational story of an intervention with disadvantaged youth that simultaneously addresses South Australia’s skilled workforce shortages. Over the past three years, the student-devised Robotics Peer Mentoring program has grown to involve mentors from all three South Australian universities and the TAFE sector in a cooperative effort to interest Year 9 students from a number of high schools in northern Adelaide in the fundamental disciplines of mathematics and science through a ‘hands on’ learning activity. Enhanced retention rates have already been observed and the program has won significant government funding.

In addition, UniSA students and staff have worked with industry to establish a successful program of ‘consultancies’, using both university and secondary students, to solve real-world problems for firms operating in the areas of high technology and advanced engineering, including Codan and Tennix.

The team will travel to Toronto in Canada to defend our World Champions title, won last year by Curtin University of Technology, against national champion teams from 44 other countries at the 2005 SIFE World Cup, to be held over the period 5 to 7 October. We all wish them well.
As a unique group of leaders in Australian business, professional firms, higher education and research organisations, the Business/Higher Education Round Table (B-HERT) sees as part of its responsibility the need to articulate its views on matters of importance germane to its Mission. From time to time B-HERT issues Papers in this context – copies of which are available from the B-HERT Secretariat at a cost of $9.90 (GST incl.) per copy.

**B-HERT Paper No. 8 (July 2004) – THE FACTS: Higher Education in Australia**
A compendium of statistics on higher education. The purpose of the report is to present some key relevant perspectives, statistics, trends and comparative data. The accurate and broad-based content of the report should help those in the higher education sector gain an informed view.

($9.90 per copy)

**B-HERT Paper No. 7 (February 2004) – The Knowledge-Based Economy: Some Facts and Figures**
An update to B-HERT Paper No. 4 which provides some useful and interesting comparative data on Australia’s relative global position within the context of the knowledge-based economy.

($7.70 per copy)

**Leading Edge – Australian Public Sector Research (November 2003)**
This publication seeks to showcase our developing research excellence, and widen the opportunities available to many of the researchers, their universities and agencies which supported this research, and to the nation.

($15.95 per copy)

**B-HERT Paper No. 6 (February 2003) – Research Issues for the Service Sector, particularly for Community Service Professions and Export Services**
This paper attempts to define the service sector, particularly on two important areas, the community services sector and the export industries sector.

**Position Paper No. 10 (September 2002) – The Importance of the Social Sciences to Government**
Social policy is concerned with a range of human needs and the social institutions created to meet these needs. The social sciences cover a wide array of complex issues and disciplines. Government activities are now centrally related to social policy and the boundaries between social, economic and science policy are blurred. Commonwealth Government expenditure on social security and welfare, health and education amounts to some 65% of total expenditure and indicates the importance and persuasiveness of social policies. The social sciences and policies are important in ensuring the maintenance and functioning of a stable society by attempting to provide a more equitable distribution of wealth and income and ensuring an understanding of governance and institutions of civil society. Universities play a key role in providing social science courses which educate graduates in a philosophy, knowledge and the new developments of social science. The enables government agencies to access skilled social scientists who are capable of developing and implementing new social science policies appropriate to meet the needs of an ever changing world.

**Position Paper No. 9 (August 2002) – Enhancing the Learning and Employability of Graduates: The Role of Generic Skills**
In an era when various new kinds of partnerships and relationships are developing between industry and higher education, and between the different sectors in education, a paper on generic skills is timely. This paper outlines the nature and scope of generic skills before discussing the reasons why they have become a focus of policy interest. The benefits of paying attention to generic skills for learning and employability purposes are considered in relation to relevant research findings. The holism, contextuality and relational level of generic skills as well as the links to lifelong learning are highlighted. Examples of the incorporation of generic skills into higher education structures and courses are also described. There is also discussion of ways to close the ‘employability’ gap.

The paper then suggests a learning framework for generic skills at different levels.

Finally the paper makes some recommendations in respect of further work that would be valuable in pursuit of the agenda to enhance the learning capability of employability of graduates.

COPIES OF B-HERT NEWS CAN BE OBTAINED AT A COST OF $7.70 PER COPY (GST INCL.) BY CONTACTING THE B-HERT SECRETARIAT BY PH: 61 3 9419 8068 FAX: 61 3 9419 8276 OR EMAIL: BHERT@BHERT.COM
UPCOMING EVENTS

EMERGING SKILLS SUMMIT

Emerging Skills 2020 & Beyond – What will they be and as a nation how are we placed?

One of the challenges facing both business and post-compulsory education and training providers is to identify what are the skills sets and knowledge sets which will be relevant in the years ahead and how best to meet these.

Increasing commercial pressures will inevitably speed the time-to-market of emerging technologies. In a globally competitive marketplace there is constant pressure to compress the lag between demand for and supply of appropriately educated and trained staff.

The Business/Higher Education Round Table (B-HERT) is hosting a one-day summit to address these issues. Business and education providers need to put in place mechanisms to ensure we anticipate our needs and know how to meet them.

Recently there has been considerable discussion about the growing problem of skill shortages. Such shortages cover an array of industry sectors. However, what is not being discussed is the type of skills the Australian workforce will need in the coming decades and the nature of the education and training which will be needed to support those needs.

Australia is increasingly a knowledge-based economy. Sectors such as elaborately transformed manufacturing, ICT, engineering, mining, agriculture, the sciences and the professions will be the enablers in our pursuit of a high performing knowledge-based economy.

The summit will be an opportunity to canvass the opinions and ideas of thought leaders from a number of areas of expertise – business, industry, higher education, vocational education and training, research, graduate employers and the professions. The aim is to develop concrete proposals for implementation by the various stakeholders.

When: 22 November 2005
Where: Sydney CBD
Cost: $429.00 incl GST (refreshments and lunch included)

Programme and registration details will be available at www.bhert.com once programme is finalised.

REGIONAL ENGAGEMENT FORUMS

NETWORKING THE ENGAGEMENT – NSW

Co-host: Hastings Council
When: 2nd half 2005
Where: Port Macquarie, NSW
Cost: $tba (refreshments and lunch included)

Programme and registration details will be available at www.bhert.com once details are confirmed.

Past Events

For presentations and programme contents from previous conferences, symposia and forums please visit our event/past events page at www.bhert.com

IF YOU WISH TO ADVERTISE IN THIS SPACE PLEASE CONTACT THE B-HERT SECRETARIAT FOR DETAILS ON +61 3 9419 8068 or anne@bhert.com
The Business/Higher Education Round Table has three outstanding publications highlighting what’s going on, where the opportunities are and where Australia stands.

THE FACTS is a compendium of higher education information gathered from a variety of sources. The accurate and broad-based content of the report should help those in the higher education sector gain an informed view. $9.90 incl. gst

KNOWLEDGE-BASED ECONOMY: Some Facts & Figures highlights where Australia stands on the world stage in a number of critical industry indicators. $7.70 incl. gst. For example, how do we rate on Investment in Knowledge, R&D Intensity, R&D Expenditure as a % of GDP, Biotechnology R&D, ICT Development and Venture Capital Investment.

LEADING EDGE is a collection of brief vignettes which highlight the research excellence that places Australia amongst the best in the world. $15.95 incl. gst. As Brendan Nelson, Minister for Education, Science and Training says in his foreword – ‘It is research and innovation that will drive us confidently into the knowledge society of the 21st Century’.

YES, I WISH TO ORDER _______ COPY/COPIES OF ‘THE FACTS’ at $9.90 per copy (GST incl.)

YES, I WISH TO ORDER _______ COPY/COPIES OF ‘THE KNOWLEDGE-BASED ECONOMY’ at $7.70 per copy (GST incl.)

YES, I WISH TO ORDER _______ COPY/COPIES OF ‘LEADING EDGE’ at $15.95 per copy (GST incl.)

YES, I WISH TO ORDER _______ SET/SETS OF ‘ALL THREE PUBLICATIONS’ at $29.95 per set (GST incl.)

□ Cheque payable to: Business/Higher Education Round Table ABN 80 050 207 942 24 Brunswick Street, Fitzroy Vic 3065 Ph: +61 3 9419 8068 Fax: +61 3 9419 8276 Email: bhert@bhert.com

□ Please charge my credit card – Type: □ Visa □ Mastercard □ AMEX

Card #: ................................................................. Card Expiry Date: ..................................................

Signature: .................................................. Full Name: ..........................................................

Position: .................................................. Organisation: ..........................................................

Address: .......................................................... Postcode: ..................................................

Ph: ................................ Fax: .......................... E-mail: ..........................................................
The purpose of the Business/Higher Education Round Table (B-HERT) is to pursue initiatives that will advance the goals and improve the performance of both business and higher education for the benefit of Australian society.

B-HERT is the only body where leaders of Australia’s business, research, professional and academic communities come together to address important issues of common concern, to improve the interaction between Australian business and higher education institutions, and to help guide the future directions of higher education.

In pursuing this mission BHERT aims to influence public opinion and government policy on selected issues of importance.

Mission Statement

B-HERT believes that a prerequisite for a more prosperous and equitable society in Australia is a more highly-educated community. In material terms it fosters economic growth and improved living standards – through improved productivity and competitiveness with other countries. In terms of equity, individual Australians should have the opportunity to realise their full social, cultural, political and economic potential.

Membership of B-HERT comprises Australian universities, corporations, professional associations, the major public research organisations (Commonwealth Scientific and Industrial Research Organisation and Australian Nuclear Science and Technology Organisation).

B-HERT pursues a number of activities through its Working Groups and active alliances with relevant organisations both domestically and internationally. It publishes a regular newsletter (B-HERT NEWS), reporting on its activities and current issues of concern relevant to its Mission.