



**SUBMISSION TO DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION, SCIENCE AND TRAINING “REVIEW OF THE IMPACT OF THE *HIGHER EDUCATION SUPPORT ACT 2003*: FUNDING CLUSTER MECHANISM”.**

**Deans of Arts, Social Sciences and Humanities**

The Deans of Arts, Social Sciences and Humanities group (DASSH) represents the groupings of these disciplines in all Australian and New Zealand Universities. DASSH welcomes the Review of the Funding Cluster Mechanism and in our submission we seek to highlight relevant issues pertaining to our sector for consideration in this Review. We are, however, concerned at the proposal that there be no new funds because any movement of funds into health and clinical areas will diminish funding to Humanities and Social Sciences.

DASSH acknowledges that there are differential costs associated with teaching particular disciplines and that any funding mechanism will have broad groupings funded at different rates, depending on an assessment of the relative costs associated with offering such disciplines. It also acknowledges that the current allocation of specific humanities and social science disciplines to particular clusters (with a few notable exceptions discussed below) is generally appropriate. Nonetheless, DASSH is concerned at the constraints placed on this Review, most importantly the announcement that this Review will have no impact on overall funding for disciplines in higher education institutions. In effect this prescription means that the focus will be internal relativities (which of course is appropriate) without any assessment of the adequacy of the base line costs and how these may have changed over time, leading to some clusters being advantaged at the expense of others. Reassessing the relativities without any reconsideration of the actual costs of teaching any discipline seems at best perfunctory and at worst an exercise in social engineering to meet short-term goals to promote particular disciplines deemed to be in crisis and in need of support (at the expense of other disciplines).

This is even more pertinent given that the actual relationship of clusters is still largely based on the relative funding model, developed in the late 1980s after extensive review of actual teaching costs. This model was formulated at a time when the humanities and social sciences were largely “chalk and talk” disciplines. The landscape of higher education training in these disciplines, however, has been radically transformed in the last twenty years as we have moved to address the real educational

needs of contemporary students utilising a range of digital technologies (on-line discussion groups, digitised support material on line for student access, digitised image

data bases, GIS material, whole units of study, assessment exercises and feedback delivered electronically, video conferencing etc) which are no longer confined to media disciplines but are prevalent in all areas of teaching in the humanities and social sciences. Moreover many institutions have sought to better address the needs of industry through internships and other placement systems, which are expensive to maintain particularly for disciplines in the social sciences (sociology, welfare, gender studies, media studies, social policy) where internship programs are relatively recent, most common and for which no account was taken in the development of relative funding models. While it is important to reassess relativities, to do so in the absence of any reassessment of changing teaching costs for the sector as whole, is to take one part of the funding cluster process out of context with the consequent risks of misconstruing the problem and offering solutions that do not address the question being posed.

These larger concerns about the scope and limitations of the cluster review aside, DASSH would also like to highlight a number of specific anomalies in the allocation of particular humanities and social science disciplines to clusters.

1. Archaeology is a glaring example of a discipline severely compromised by its allocation to cluster 3. Most Archaeology programs in Australia have a significant field-work component, requiring field trips for students (sometimes overseas). Equally important, students are given intense practical experience in the analysis and assessment of material remains and this requires the provision of laboratory and bench space. Some Archaeology programs in the country support material laboratories with chemicals, fume cupboards, microscopes and other diagnostic technologies. A few utilise electron microscope facilities (at a cost). To assess Archaeology as similar in teaching cost to literature fundamentally misconceives the nature of education in this field and forces institutions to cross-subsidise this discipline to a significant extent in order to maintain credible (by international standards) undergraduate programs.
2. A similar case can be made for some other field-work disciplines. Linguistics (like Archaeology in cluster 3) is a case in point. Many linguistics programs in Australia have a strong ethnographic strand, requiring some fieldwork and training in Australia and the Pacific at the undergraduate level, focusing on endangered languages. Even where undergraduate students are not taken out into the field, institutions often retain large and expensive recordings of languages (increasingly in costly digital formats) for students to utilise in the class-room context and for writing research essays. Programs that are more oriented towards contemporary sociolinguistics have significant costs associated

with analysing contemporary media in such contexts as language and media laboratories. This is another discipline that has to be cross-subsidised by others to be sustainable.

3. Insufficient attention seems to be given to the problem of professional accreditation in the allocation of disciplines to clusters. Some programs, notably in social work and psychology, are required to meet formal external accreditation criteria (specific units of study, additional units of study,

placements, practicum) and this imposes added burdens on teaching programs that places these disciplines at a disadvantage to others without accreditation requirements in their current cluster. The costs of maintaining and administering practicum, like internships, in many disciplines, notably education but also social policy and media studies, creates pressures on institutions to cross-subsidise such areas to maintain these programs.

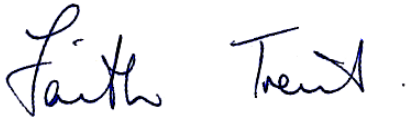
4. At present there is no separate category in the clusters for ancient languages (Ancient Greek, Latin, Classical Hebrew, Sanskrit and others) with the consequent problem that some institutions might put them in Ancient history (cluster 3 and hence totally inappropriate cluster for language teaching) or fit them uncomfortably into such categories as southern European or Southern Asian languages. It would be useful to have a language cluster category for ancient languages.
5. The relative position of the language cluster itself we see as problematical. Its position fails to sustain high quality language acquisition leading to cross subsidization or deleterious cuts to teaching hours and resources. While languages should be grouped together the evident decline (documented in a number of recent studies, some commissioned by DASSH) in enrolments in key languages and the move over the last decade, because of funding pressures, to cut the hours devoted to language instruction threatens the capacity of Australian higher education to sustain high quality language instruction programs. Australia has a very poor record, at both the secondary school and university level, in building second language competence and the resulting monolingual competence of the majority of our graduates puts them at a considerable disadvantage in a global skills market where increasingly bilingualism and multilingualism is the norm. The challenge here is far larger than funding relativities but because of the funding relativity for languages many institutions are reluctant to sustain languages of low enrolment or support sufficient teaching resources to maintain high quality programs (with improved language acquisition outcomes). Australia's record of second language acquisition is relatively poor and universities have struggled to improve this situation in a context where good language acquisition programs require extensive cross-subsidisation from other disciplines.
6. Creative Arts (drama, screen, music, TV, digital media, dance etc) are areas which need substantial and renewable infrastructure. The technological developments and use of new materials necessitates a different funding regime from that which is currently used. As these disciplines have entered universities their funding in effect has been diminished as part of the cluster for Visual and Performing Arts. If a costing exercise were to take place, these disciplines would need to be funded at a similar level to science.
7. Many Deans of Arts, Social Sciences and Humanities are responsible for awards that require practicum, placements or fieldwork. The costs of these have increased markedly, in some cases because external sites require to be paid by

the University (education and some social work fall into this category and their demands for payment are rising) in some cases because insurance and occupational health and safety requirements are more stringent and costly (archaeology, anthropology, for example). Where rural practica are involved the costs of supervision increase markedly. The recent Parliamentary Inquiry into Teacher Education received submissions, which indicated that practicum is under funded against actual costs by a factor of 50%.

Overall the Humanities and Social Sciences cover a diverse range of disciplines of critical importance to the nation and the future workforce. A 1980s costing model and its designation of relativities is not appropriate some 20 years later, given all the changes in discipline requirements and teaching and learning methodologies. Our continuing concern as Deans of Arts, Social Sciences and Humanities is that if arts, humanities and social sciences are, to fix other anomalies, further compromised relative to other disciplines without any assessment of real teaching costs, then our disciplines we will be severely disadvantaged and the high quality education currently offered Australian students in these fields will be seriously compromised.

We would be pleased to provide any further information that is of assistance,

Regards,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Faith Trent". The signature is written in a cursive style with a period at the end.

PROFESSOR FAITH TRENT, AM  
PRESIDENT, DASSH