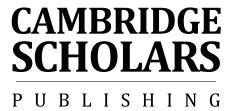# Making Meaning, Making Money

Making Meaning, Making Money:
directions for the arts and cultural industries
in The Creative Age

Edited by

Lisa Andersen and Kate Oakley

**CAMBRIDGE
SCHOLARS**

P U B L I S H I N G

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INTRODUCTION

In his essay for this volume, David Throsby asks whether we are at "a new moment" for cultural policy, and if so, what is the nature of that moment and what does it tell us about the directions that that cultural policy should take us in? The rest of the volume is, in some ways, concerned with trying to answer that question, with authors concurring about the pertinence of this debate, but diverging on much else, including whether future directions for culture can be framed in terms of "cultural policy" alone.

The origins of this collection are in a long lunch—a social formation praised by Tony Moore in this volume for "enhancing creativity"—eaten by Lisa Andersen and Jill Eddington, the then Director of the Byron Bay Writers Festival, not long after Pluto Press's launch of the Australian edition of Richard Florida's *The Rise of the Creative Class*. Feeling the arts and cultural industries had been banished from "father's table" for the decade of John Howard's conservative Australian Government—while still being given pie—the idea that the arts were essential for vital communities was thrilling, as was the knowledge that policy makers in the UK, and elsewhere, were putting the re-branded "creative industries" closer to the centre in decisions about regional development.

Florida's "Creative Class" and the UK's creative industries period were about wealth generation and competitive advantage. But we needed a more integrated explanation of the cultural, economic and social policy dimensions of the arts and cultural industries, alongside building understanding of how individual (or intrinsic) experiences of the arts contribute to personal imagination and public dreaming—all in terms and ways acceptable to a "sector" comprising a broad set of practices and values, suspicious of being trapped in the amber light of conservative, instrumentalist policy. It also seemed important that any (re)imagining of cultural policy should not continue to be left entirely to Academy—though academics have an important role to play—and senior arts agencies, but be directly engaged with the practices and consequences of cultural activity.

From 2004 a series of national arts forums were held at the Byron Bay Writers Festival. Organised by Lisa Andersen and Jill Eddington and

supported by Regional Arts NSW, the Northern Rivers Writers' Centre, the Australia Council for the Arts and Arts NSW, the forums brought arts thinkers and practitioners together—out from their chardonnay stocked ivory towers, silos, cultural elites, garrets and siege mentalities—to consider cultural policy, directions for the arts, and ways of developing robust evidence and integrating knowledges and understanding.

The current volume features contributions from a range of people—with diverse perspectives and opinions—who participated in these forums. More than 800 people came, but what was discussed and debated reached a broader audience. This book is the last public outcome from a "product range" that engaged thousands in Australia and elsewhere and included radio broadcasts, webinars, newspaper articles, bibliographies of arts research, audio CDs, podcasts and even a short documentary made by Cathy Henkel and featuring Kate Oakley's keynote speech at the 2004 Forum.[1]

The interest is not surprising. Rarely has culture been so much at the heart of policy discussions in so many places at once. To take but one, important example: China's latest five-year plan is loaded with references to the importance of culture, arguing that, "China not only needs strength in economy, science, technology and defence, but also cultural strength to be ahead of international competition." In that one sentence lies much of the explanation for the current resurgence of interest in cultural policy, the "new moment" as Throsby puts it, but also much that is of concern to traditional cultural policy advocates. Culture has rarely been so much discussed by policymakers; but often only in terms of something else. It has found its way into debates about education and industrial policy, the future of cities and the criminal justice system and, in the form of the creative industries, is increasingly seen as part of international competitiveness, from Shanghai to Sheffield.

Many long-term practitioners and advocates welcome these developments and this embedding of culture in a wide range of policy discussions is evident from the papers collected here. Cathy Henkel's contribution on the Northern Rivers area of New South Wales, is one of several that discuss the role of culture in regional development—in her case the tale of a region stimulated in part through the influx of creative workers and the development of an accommodating milieu. Other papers tell of rural areas from the Highlands of Scotland to Montana where planners—noting that innovations in cultural consumption and creative

practices offer opportunities for revitalisation—are looking to repeat this success, albeit in different political and economic conditions. Anne Bamford's focus is on education and on the role that an "arts rich" education can have in developing communication skills, critical thinking and the ability to innovate.

The role of culture within community development, particularly what Martin Mulligan calls "the nature of community in a globalising world," is discussed by several authors—Deborah Mills, Chris Gibson and Paul Brown—as well as Mulligan. Many chapters talk about culture as an aspect of place, whether as the way that communities seek an accommodation within the global market, via tourism for example, or the way they can offer new models of sustainability and perhaps even an alternative to the current dominance (albeit shaky) of neo-liberal economic models.

Phrases like "international competitiveness," "regional development," "education reform," "community cohesion" or "innovation" are thus more likely to crop up in cultural policy documents, and in these pages, than words like "arts" or "beauty," "painting" or "literature." Many of our authors welcome this enlisting of new friends for culture; others are troubled by what these new friends might demand as a price for their company.

In infiltrating these other policy domains, culture has adopted a variety of guises. Most notably, perhaps, it has metamorphosised into "creativity," first as a descriptor for particular industrial activities, the "creative industries," and more recently as an economic necessity; as the forerunner of the innovation on which our economies are said to depend. At the same time, as Chris Gibson notes, creativity is being constructed as a "damaging conflation of socio-economic inequality and cultural attributes," to be deemed "uncreative," is akin to being deemed "feckless" in Victorian times—the difference, for the poor, between being "deserving" and "undeserving."

The new prominence for culture thus raises some concerns, many of which are reflected in this volume. The thread of instrumentalism that runs through much cultural policy discourse worries some writers, not least because there is a danger than in justifying cultural support only in instrumental terms—as a way to reduce crime or boost exam results— there is the chance that another intervention will claim to be equally or

more effective, and any sense of the unique claims that culture can make for public support has been lost.

Others argue that despite the lip service (in Anne Bamford's phrase) that policymakers are now paying to all things cultural, the real commitment in terms of funding, support for education, prestige and recognition remains weak. Although "creativity" is lauded, many of the things that feed it—from good classroom experiences to community arts—are being, if not starved, at least put on a restrictive diet.

The tension between rhetoric and reality is also reflected in the clash between growing calls for creativity and what Tony Moore calls the "age of anxiety." At the same time as the economy is said to require creative, critical thinkers and the language of personal development and self-expression is more a feature of contemporary business rhetoric than it is of contemporary politics. It is important to examine what is meant by "creativity" in the rhetoric and to ask how it can thrive in atmospheres of fear, constraints on civil liberties, economic downturn and precarious employment.

Culture would at one time have been seen as one of the natural homes for discussing such issues—a time honoured space for social critique and self-examination, even in a hostile environment. Tony Moore's contrast between the response of artists in Thatcherite Britain and the response of artists to today's anxieties deals with this issue directly. One relevant difference may be that, although culture was almost certainly undervalued by the Thatcher government, that very marginalisation gave it a space in which to operate. Today's practitioners often have to tread carefully to ensure that being uncritically embraced for the magic dust they can sprinkle on the economy does not restrict their freedom of movement in other spheres.

None of our authors suggest that developing a national cultural policy would resolve all, or even most, of these issues; though, as Christopher Madden argues, it might help to develop a logical coherence for government's various involvements in culture. More importantly, the process of developing a policy might open up a space for debate that is, in itself, as important as anything a policy document will contain. And even those of our authors who are sceptical about the value of a national cultural policy—or even our capacity to develop one—have ideas about what debates it needs to explore.

David Throsby is clear that no debate about cultural policy can start without considering the benefits of the subsidised arts system and, within that, debating what funding priorities should be. He makes a strong case both for community cultural development and for new media; the first because of its broad social contribution, the second because of its links to wider economic innovation. Deborah Mills and Paul Brown both make eloquent cases for the role of community cultural development, which Brown sees as a constituting "a site for the production of important knowledge about complex social, economic and environmental matters," and which Mills sees as a way of getting beyond the rather crude instrumentalism of much "arts as social policy approaches" and instead as way of embedding "cultural sensibility in the ways that governments think and act." Or as Chris Gibson argues, in his chapter on regional development, we "need creativity in policy-making much more than overt policy prescriptions about creativity."

That cultural policy should indeed touch on the role of culture within the economy and on the "creative industries" agenda is generally agreed, though there are divergences on how and to what extent this needs to happen. It is the sustainability of some of the claims for the creative industries and the competitive framework into which they are often placed that concerns us. As Chris Gibson argues: "What seems to be happening is that a singular interpretation of creativity is being incorporated into a rather uncreative framework, in which private sector solutions to regional problems, the ideal of creative, independent, entrepreneurial subjects, and the primacy of place competition in global markets remain paramount." And as Cathy Henkel, in what is generally a positive picture of region that has benefited from an influx of creative practitioners, points out, success brings it own problems in terms of place development, gentrification, higher prices and marginalisation of both lower-paid practitioners and other low-income residents. The current economic downturn adds still further questions to a model based on growing consumer markets.

Overcoming this, as Chris Gibson suggests above, is as much about the institutional structures and administrative arrangements through which policy is delivered, as it is about policy development. As Deborah Mills argues, cultural policy must be sensitive and aware of the cultural consequences of all government policies and activities—a sort of "culture proofing" of other public policies. David Throsby contends that extending the ambit of cultural policy in this way, to embrace the cultural underpinnings of other policies, would be something relatively new in

Australia but would open up a variety of possibilities and questions about issues as diverse as the Australian republic, the treatment of refugees and indigenous affairs.

It is clear that the embedding of culture within wider policy frameworks can only increase the calls for improved evidence as to the effectiveness of these collisions. As researchers, consultants, activists, academics and practitioners, most of our authors are sympathetic to calls for "more research," though again the nature of much of what passes for evidence is questioned. As Paul Brown points out, evidence-based processes are deemed important by governments, yet much of the evidence gathering is structured "from the centre," reflecting funding programmes and temporary policy concerns, rather than a deep desire to understand the complex ways in which culture interacts with wider society. And as Kate Oakley points out, on the rare occasions that serious research is carried out on cultural impacts, policymakers and even arts advocates are often disappointed by the results—there are not as many people "saved" from crime, not as many sustainable jobs, as some of the more hyperbolic rhetoric would lead you to believe.

The landslide election victory for Kevin Rudd's Labor government in Australia in late 2007 was greeted with enthusiasm by many in the cultural sector alongside a sense of relief that new ideas could finally get into circulation—including some old new ideas. Almost immediately The Prime Minister's Literary Award—one of the richest in the world—was announced. Then, in February 2008, Rudd delivered the long-awaited apology to the Stolen Generations of Indigenous Australians at the opening of Federal Parliament, followed, in April, by the inclusion of "Creative Australia" as a critical area of policy for discussion of the 2020 Ideas Summit, with accompanying star power from Cate Blanchett and Hugh Jackman.

And more star power was injected into Creative Australia in the form of millionaire, rock icon, Peter Garrett, as the first Australian Minister for the Arts drawn from a successful career in the arts, who, as Tony Moore says, "knows the value of risk-taking." His first arts policy, *New Directions in the Arts* (2007), included creative industry concepts of entrepreneurialism and innovation alongside greater support for arts education, community engagement, equity and the "democratisation" of the arts, with a focus on Indigenous arts and young and emerging artists.

While Indigenous artists and visual artists welcomed the resale royalties scheme, the Government's first budget contained no increase in spending—the slice of pie is the same. And in May the cultural sector got a look at Kevin Rudd's position on artistic freedom when he condemned an exhibition by photographer Bill Henson containing images of nude children as "revolting." So, as David Throsby says, it is "too early to tell whether the Rudd Government will deliver a new dawning for the arts and culture in Australia—whether in fact a new moment for cultural policy has arrived." But the signs for the eternally hopeful cultural sector are that some politicians *have* been listening to the ideas and the debates you will find in this volume—and the policy landscape on "creative" *is* moving away from "new markets." In his address to the National Press Club on 3 September, 2008, the Innovation Minister, Senator Kim Carr, said:

> I believe the creative arts—and the humanities and the social sciences—make a terrible mistake when they claim support on the basis of their commercial value.

> Whatever they may be worth in the marketplace, it is their intrinsic value we should treasure them for.

> We should support these disciplines because they give us pleasure, knowledge, meaning, and inspiration.

> No other pay-off is required.

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[1] Available from www.regionalartsnsw.com.au

PART I:

THE CULTURAL POLICY MOMENT

CHAPTER ONE

A NEW "MOMENT" FOR CULTURAL POLICY?

DAVID THROSBY

Introduction

In August 1994 a special issue of the journal *Media Information Australia* appeared, edited by Terry Flew, Gay Hawkins and Elizabeth Jacka. The title of the issue was "The Policy Moment," and it contained a collection of articles on contemporary issues in cultural policy and cultural studies by a wide range of academics, bureaucrats and policy-makers. In an overview essay at the front of the collection, Stuart Cunningham summed up the state of affairs as follows:

> Historically speaking, we seem to be living in a cultural policy "moment."
> In Australia as in many countries…cultural policy has hitherto been a
> backwater—dominated by constricting assumptions about "high" art and
> worthy subsidy; narrow in its consideration only of the arts rather than of
> culture more generally (an aesthetic rather than an anthropological concept
> of culture) (Cunningham 1994, 4).

In contrast, Cunningham went on to argue, policy-makers in the early 1990s were increasingly looking to the notion of culture as embodying a framework for livability in conditions of economic, social and environmental change. He suggested that the cultural policy "moment" had arrived. He noted that

> [b]oth the anthropological/institutional notion of culture (and its offspring the
> deployment of culture industries) and the broad rather than narrow definition of
> culture as a whole way of life are necessary preconditions for the emergence of the
> moment. Each of these preconditions now has a foothold in Australian public
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In the same month in which this up-beat assessment appeared, the Federal Government's Department of Communications and the Arts organised a two-day forum in Canberra under the title "Creative Culture: the New Growth Industries" at which a comprehensive gathering of researchers, government officials and representatives of arts and cultural organisations talked in glowing terms about the expanding prospects for the creative industries in the Australian economy and about how government policy could facilitate their growth (Department of Communications and the Arts, 1994). Several months after this forum, in October 1994, the government's cultural policy statement *Creative Nation* was released. The cultural policy moment had arrived indeed.

Since 1994 there have been two changes of Australia's federal government, both of which have had significant implications for cultural policy. The first was the replacement in 1996 of Paul Keating's progressive Labor government by John Howard's Liberal/National coalition leading to a turn towards a more conservative stance in cultural matters in the years that followed. Then, after eleven years of the Howard administration, the political wheel revolved once more, bringing about the election in November 2007 of the new-look Labor Party led by Kevin Rudd. The enthusiasm with which the Australian people disposed of the old and embraced the new at the 2007 election might be taken to herald the possibility of a more progressive direction in cultural policy, prompting the question: has a new cultural policy moment come upon us, strangely reminiscent of the one that occurred almost fifteen years ago?

In this paper I discuss this question, picking up on some of the themes developed in my *Platform Papers* essay "Does Australia Need a Cultural Policy?" (Throsby 2006), and extending some of those themes further in the light of discussion generated since that essay's publication.[1] I begin in section 2 by looking briefly at what cultural policy is and how it grew up in Australia, culminating (in a sense) in the appearance of *Creative Nation*, discussed in section 3. I then consider in section 4 some areas of cultural

change that emerged in Australian society over the Howard years. In section 5 I discuss developments since the 2007 election, and conclude with some observations about the future direction of cultural policy in this country.

2.   The ambit of cultural policy

In most fields that are of interest to government policy such as the environment, health, education, transport and so on, the area of concern is clearly identified, and hence the scope of policy coverage is reasonably clearly delineated. Not so with culture. There are many questions surrounding the definition and usage of the word "culture" and hence of the related concept of "cultural policy." Does the term "culture" embrace only what are commonly referred to as the high arts—drama, dance, opera, "serious music," literature, the visual arts? Or does it extend to popular culture, including film, video games, television, rock music and other similar fields? Or is an anthropological or a sociological definition of culture more appropriate, as alluded to by Cunningham above, extending the coverage beyond creative activities and focussing attention on matters of identity, values, beliefs, tradition, ways of living together—in short just about anything that serves to identify a group and bind it together? It is apparent that what comprises cultural policy will vary widely according to which interpretation of culture is used.

In practice, however, there is little doubt that historically in Australia the term cultural policy, to the extent that it has been used at all, has meant arts policy. So, for example, a document entitled *Cultural Policy in Australia* written in 1980 by Jean Battersby, the first administrative head of the Australia Council, was principally concerned with the high arts as defined above, although she did include chapters on film and broadcasting, and there was even a section on sport (Battersby 1980). Likewise, twenty years later, Deborah Stevenson's book subtitled *Making Australian Cultural Policy* was also concerned primarily with government policy towards the arts, although her orientation as she charted the changing environment over the last couple of decades was anything but elitist (Stevenson 2000).

The development of Commonwealth arts policy since Harold Holt moved to set up the first Australian Council for the Arts in 1967 has been documented by a number of writers.[2] The story is briefly summarised as follows. The first half of the 1970s saw a substantial consolidation and

expansion of arts support through the establishment of the Australia Council by the newly-elected Whitlam Government. Soon after it was born, the Council had to endure a searching review of the rationale for its functions carried out by the Industries Assistance Commission (1976), and then faced another enquiry ten years later by a House of Representatives Standing Committee on Expenditure (1986), chaired by Leo McLeay. Despite their critical demeanour, neither of these enquiries brought about any significant changes in the Australia Council's operations, nor did they upset the willingness of the government of the day (Coalition in the first case, Labor in the second) to continue funding the arts from the public purse. Indeed by compelling arts advocates to justify their position, these enquiries helped to consolidate in a local context the economic arguments for government intervention in this area, arguments which were being well worked over by economists elsewhere.[3]

The articulation of an economic basis for arts policy in terms of public goods provision during the 1980s was given an added dimension by the climate of economic liberalisation and microeconomic reform prevailing at that time. In this environment lobbyists found it advantageous to promote the arts as generators of economic wealth, arguing that the arts made significant contributions to incomes, exports, employment and regional development. Such a characterisation of the arts—as an industry producing goods and services for sale to consumers rather than as a sublime expression of human creativity—ruffled many feathers at the time, and still does. Critics such as Donald Horne[4] saw these developments as implying a relentless commodification of the arts and a sell-out to the soulless rigour of the marketplace. In fact, labelling the arts as an industry does no such thing; it simply acknowledges the fact that artistic production and consumption occur in an economic context which can be analysed using the tools routinely employed by economists to study industrial organisation, consumer behaviour and market disequilibrium. Doing so does not deny that the role of art in individual experience or in society at large serves a much larger purpose.

Despite its critics, the concept of the cultural industries that started to take shape during the late 1980s reached its apotheosis in the Keating Government's grand vision for a cultural policy referred to above. But *Creative Nation* was much more than a blueprint for industry development. It represented the first serious effort to put together a comprehensive national cultural policy, springing from the very roots of what could be described as indigenous and non-indigenous Australian

culture. As such, it represented a decisive shift away from the narrowness of earlier policy statements concerned primarily or exclusively with support for the arts.

3.   Creative Nation

Given that *Creative Nation*[5] was the first attempt to spell out in a single document what an Australian national-level cultural policy could look like—what Christopher Madden refers to elsewhere in this volume as a "monolithic cultural policy" —it is worth dwelling on how it was framed and what it prescribed in terms of actual policy implementation. It is important at the outset to note that *Creative Nation* was motivated overwhelmingly by ideas about Australian identity and cultural sovereignty. The very first paragraph of the Introduction reads:

> To speak of Australian culture is to recognise our common heritage. It is to say that we share ideas, values, sentiments and traditions, and that we see in all the various manifestations of these what it means to be Australian (p.15).

The ways in which a national-level cultural policy would reflect these sentiments would be

> by shoring up our heritage in new or expanded national institutions and adapting technology to its preservation and dissemination, by creating new avenues for artistic and intellectual growth and expression and by supporting our artists and writers (p.7).

By these means Australia would "ride the wave of global change in a way that safeguards and promotes our national culture" (p. 7).

As noted above, *Creative Nation* saw itself as being not only a cultural policy, but also an economic policy. To some extent this picked up on the 1980s trend towards interpreting arts policy in economic terms to which I drew attention earlier. But it also extended these arguments much further, by embracing the cultural ramifications of new communications technologies, first through an emphasis on new media as means for cultural production, participation, dissemination and access, and second through a broader focus on cultural industry development. The essential element common to both cultural and economic progress was seen to be creativity; on the one side artists would generate innovative ideas reflecting our distinctive cultural identity, while on the other side

creativity would be fostered as a key resource in the development of the new economy.

The report saw the Federal Government's role in cultural development as comprising a number of strategies including: nurturing creativity and excellence; enabling all Australians to enjoy the widest possible range of cultural experience; celebrating Indigenous art and culture; preserving Australia's heritage; promoting the expression of Australia's cultural identity, including its great diversity; and developing lively and sustainable cultural industries, including those evolving with the emergence of new technologies. The authors of the report proposed a variety of measures to achieve these ends, including: an expansion of the Australia Council; a range of specific initiatives in the performing arts, the visual arts and literature; increased support for film and public broadcasting; new media development; various industry strategies; expansion of the Commonwealth's role in the protection and preservation of cultural heritage; and other programs in education and training, market development and tourism. In short, *Creative Nation* provided not only a rationale and advocacy for an active Commonwealth role in Australia's cultural development, but also a set of proposals with resources attached for putting that role into effect.

For its time, *Creative Nation* was an exceptionally forward-looking document, anticipating several lines of cultural policy development which have since found expression in other countries, if not here in Australia. For example, its efforts to link the cultural industries with new media technologies and the growth of a creative workforce prefigured later moves in these directions in the UK, the US and other countries.[6] Nevertheless, despite its heroic intent, *Creative Nation* proved to be longer on rhetoric than on any real capacity to deliver cohesive and operational measures to bring about change. True, it gave rise to some successful new programs in the cultural field, but it also produced some spectacular failures. Overall, it did not lead to any dramatic shifts in cultural policy formulation or implementation at the national level. Any chance that, given time, it might have yielded longer term fruits was effectively scuttled by the change of federal government in 1996. Curiously, the overall spirit of *Creative Nation* has become, in the ensuing years, more apparent in the States than at the Commonwealth level, insofar as it has been the States rather than the Commonwealth that have picked up on the creative industries agenda. Most of the States have shown interest in industry development strategies in which new media, digital content

technologies and the creative industries more generally play a significant role, especially as components of initiatives for urban or regional growth.

4.   Cultural change 1996 to 2007

How did Australian society change in cultural terms during the eleven years of conservative rule? Cultural change is a gradual process affected by a variety of internal and external influences. Certain cultural values may seem long-lasting and resistant to change, others may be more fluid; either way measuring cultural change is problematical because culture itself is not a single fixed entity but a mix of many different components. Furthermore at a policy level it is unclear to what extent cultural change occurs autonomously within society (as a result, say, of demographic shifts) and to what extent it is influenced by government action. And if governments do indeed influence the directions of cultural change, are they behaving proactively in shaping cultural values, or simply reacting to what they perceive to be the mood of the people?

Looking back over the Howard years we can identify both external and internal influences that affected Australian culture in one way or another. The major external factors have been the inexorable processes of globalisation, and the rise in global insecurity following 9/11 and the invasion of Iraq. In regard to the former, debate on the cultural impacts of globalisation continues without, so far, any decisive result—evidence can be found both for the penetration of universal cultural symbols (mostly of U.S. origin) on the one hand, and for the resilience of local cultural identities on the other. The cultural ramifications arising from the fear of terrorism are more disturbing. Incumbent governments in Western countries have been able to draw some political advantage from a heightened sense of insecurity amongst the population, aware that in times of uncertainty people tend to stick with the government they know. More broadly, a process of cultural polarisation, crudely summarised in the title of Benjamin Barber's 1996 book *Jihad vs. McWorld*, has been given added impetus by contemporary terrorism, placing the ideal of the multicultural society under considerable strain.

At the same time as these external influences were having some effect on cultural change in Australia, internal factors also played their part. The coming-of-age of the baby-boomer generation and continuing high levels of economic growth had produced a comfortable middle-class Australian society that seemed quite content with the way things were. The traditional

cultural concept of the "Aussie battler" was replaced with something more affluent. Whether he or she was happier as a result remains an open question, as does the matter of what comprises Australian identity in the post-millennium world.

Given these various influences, what can we say about the extent to which the former Federal Government and/or the Prime Minister himself influenced processes of cultural change in Australia over the eleven-year period? Alternatively, to what extent did the explicit or implicit cultural positions adopted by John Howard and his Ministers coincide with, or were out of step with, the cultural mood of the Australian people? This is a large and complex question deserving of an entire volume. Here I consider just three areas, conveniently tagged as the three Rs: reconciliation , refugees and the republic.[7]

First, there can be little argument that the process of reconciliation between non-Indigenous and Indigenous Australians that had been gathering momentum during the early 1990s was effectively stalled in 1996. While expressing concern about the appalling state of Indigenous health, education and welfare, the Federal Government under John Howard showed little understanding of fundamental issues affecting the relationship between European and Aboriginal society—the importance of land rights, the significance of an apology, the centrality of Indigenous culture, Aboriginal people's need for respect rather than condescension. The sentiments expressed in Paul Keating's celebrated Redfern speech of December 1992, or in the dignified and heartfelt apology written on John Howard's behalf by John Clarke and delivered by the PM's actor namesake in the run-up to the 2000 Olympic Games,[8] are not likely to have been shared by the man himself. In view of the Australian community's apparent sympathy for the idea of reconciliation, as evidenced by a number of public demonstrations of support for Indigenous rights, it can be concluded that the former Prime Minister's position in this area was out of harmony with the prevailing popular sentiment.

Second, the Coalition Government's policy towards the treatment of refugees in detention continued to reflect cultural attitudes that would appear to an outside observer to be in marked contrast to traditional Australian values of fair play and respect for human rights. Some have argued that the results of the "Tampa" election of 2001 vindicated the government's stance on refugees; if so, this would indicate a significant success for the government in shifting Australian cultural attitudes towards

a less easy-going, less tolerant and more individualistically-centred society. However, given the range of other factors that affected the outcome of that election, it is dangerous to draw such a simplistic conclusion. It seems more likely that the fundamental Australian cultural value of the "fair go," though by now irrevocably cliché-ed, is more enduring and hence that the ways in which the former Federal Government dealt with refugees was inconsistent with basic cultural attitudes in this country.

Third, the period after the Second World War saw the process of Australia's emergence at last from its colonial shadow gather momentum, a process hastened by Britain's application to join the European Common Market in the 1960s. During the 1980s and early 1990s the self-confidence of Australia as an independent nation in the Asia-Pacific region grew, consolidating a sense of Australian culture as something unique and worth protecting. The distinctiveness of Australian cultural identity continued to be celebrated with some exuberance at festivals such as the opening of the Sydney Olympic Games in 2000 and of the Melbourne Commonwealth Games in 2006. Nevertheless at a broader level our sense of cultural independence and self-determination seemed to be called into question by several of John Howard's policy positions. For example, by shrewd political manipulation he effectively scuttled the republican cause in the 1999 referendum and in so doing he ensured that the republic was off the agenda for the remainder of his term. Furthermore, he moved much closer than his predecessors in aligning Australia's foreign policy interests with those of the United States, for example by committing Australia to war in Iraq when a clear majority of the population was opposed to such action. The willingness to please our great and powerful ally had significant cultural ramifications, seen, for example, in our failure to exclude culture from the US/Australia Free Trade Agreement negotiated in 2003–04 and in our conspicuous abstention in the vote for adopting the UNESCO Cultural Diversity Convention in October 2005. Both these actions could be read in cultural terms as a meek compliance with pressure for Australia to toe the American line, and raised questions about the path of our cultural development in the future.

5.   Change and challenge post-2007

During the election campaign in November 2007, John Howard portrayed the choice facing the Australian people as one between political correctness and traditional values. He went so far as to claim that his

conservative stance on cultural issues was one of the most important distinguishing characteristics of his period in office, and he warned that election of a Labor government would have disastrous consequences for Australian cultural life. Predictions of such a calamity made little impression on the electorate; indeed there is evidence that a cultural shift was already underway that had turned against the sorts of values that Howard and his ministry represented. Both the Prime Minister himself and the government he led were soundly defeated at the election, and a Labor government was duly installed.

It is too early to tell whether the Rudd Government will deliver a new dawning for the arts and culture in Australia—whether in fact a new moment for cultural policy has arrived. So far (by mid-2008) the signals have on the whole been positive, although not entirely so. Certainly in regard to two of the three Rs noted above—reconciliation and the republic—progress has been made. The incorporation of Aboriginal ritual into the opening of the new Federal Parliament in February 2008, and the apology to the Stolen Generations delivered on that occasion, touched the hearts of Australian people in a truly remarkable way, and did much to rehabilitate Australia's cultural reputation in the world at large. Similarly, the Prime Minister has placed the republican issue back on the table, with an observation that it is now a matter not of "whether" but of "when" we will have an Australian as Head of State, although no time-table has yet been set for carrying this forward. . In regard to refugees, some of the more deplorable aspects of the former government's policies have been overturned, but there is much still to do. .

In the broader cultural policy domain, the most significant event since the election of the new Federal Government has been the inclusion of a "Creative Australia" stream as one of the ten policy areas for discussion at the 2020 Ideas Summit held in Canberra in April 2008. This stream brought together one hundred artists, academics, administrators, media people and others who talked for two days about the long-term development of our culture and put forward ideas for making creativity a central element in our lives and our economy. The resulting recommendations[9] provide a blueprint for action across areas such as support for the arts, sustainability of arts practice, broadcasting and screen culture, the development of Indigenous art, arts education, architecture and design, cultural diplomacy, and many more.

The palpable enthusiasm with which Kevin Rudd was received by arts

participants in the 2020 Summit soured somewhat subsequently when, in a controversy over censorship of artworks, he adopted what could be read as an extremely populist position. Just when there was hope that the worst of the culture wars was behind us, the flames flared again. It is unclear whether the Prime Minister's interventions in this debate indicate a fundamental conservatism in his cultural outlook. Perhaps it does, although his positive remarks about the arts in his concluding speech to the Summit might suggest otherwise. Whatever the truth of the matter, there are many hopeful signs that the new Government's overall cultural policy will continue to move in progressive directions.

6.   The way ahead

In my *Platform Papers* essay I advocated a "bottom-up" approach to cultural policy, whereby grass-roots discussions about our arts and culture could feed into a broader national debate. The 2020 Summit has clearly been a start in this direction, but the question remains as to how such a debate can coalesce into an overall cultural policy or into a series of specific policies with cultural content. In concluding this paper I point to five areas where policy attention could be directed. This is not intended to be a comprehensive list of required policy measures, simply a selection of some important areas for particular consideration.

First, we need to make a critical assessment of where our current arts policy is getting it right and where it is falling short. A first step would be to undertake a comprehensive look at the wider benefits of the arts. If past empirical evidence is anything to go by, an increase in current levels of Federal Government support for the arts would not be out of line with consumer preferences. More generous funding could catalyse a new renaissance in artistic production and access across the board. But it is not just a matter of more money, it is as much a question of how the money is used. It is ironic that two significant areas where policy attention is needed are precisely those areas whose boards have been abandoned by the Australia Council—new media and community cultural development. Although the Council has insisted that its new arrangements are continuing to cater for these areas, the symbolic implications of the changes have been unfortunate. Both of these areas have a great deal of relevance in the present cultural circumstances: community cultural development because of its positive role in generating social cohesion and understanding in ethnically diverse communities, including Indigenous communities, and new media because they are essential in making the arts' contribution to

the information economy happen.[10]

This leads to a second policy area, the creative industries agenda. Much hype surrounds claims concerning the economic contribution of the cultural industries, as Kate Oakley's paper in this volume points out. Nevertheless, in Australia there is accumulating evidence that, properly managed, these industries can contribute to sustainable growth, especially in regional areas where particular creative concentrations can be identified and fostered. Cultural policy in this field needs to focus on creativity and how the arts, as the core element of the cultural industries, can contribute to creative dynamism in the wider cultural industries as well as in other sectors of the economy. A step towards reclaiming a Commonwealth role in the development of our cultural industries is provided by the Federal Government's provision of funds over three years from 2008 for a Creative Industries Innovation Centre, a network to deliver business services to small-to-medium enterprises in the creative sector across Australia.

Thirdly, policy analysis should always pay attention to the institutional structures and administrative arrangements through which policy is delivered. In the cultural policy arena this means a wide array of cultural institutions, from public museums and galleries to the ABC and SBS. It also includes funding bodies such as the Australia Council and the newly-formed Screen Australia. An expansionary view of cultural policy in Australia would see some relaxation of the financial constraints under which all of these institutions, almost without exception, are labouring. Again, however, it may not be simply more money but also a review and, if necessary, re-affirmation of their aims and structures and the principles on which they are founded.

Fourthly, extending the ambit of cultural policy to embrace the cultural underpinnings of policies in other areas would be something relatively new in Australia and yet would be consistent with ideas of cultural openness and consistency in policy formation at the national or State level. For example, we might ask questions such as: What are the cultural implications of economic and social policies in the field of Indigenous affairs? How will changes to cross-media ownership affect Australian cultural life? How can we give more recognition to the non-monetary value of cultural goods and services in up-coming trade negotiations? These are questions that should be asked as a normal part of the process of policy development. They could be addressed if policies were required to

submit to a cultural impact assessment, in the same way that environmental impact assessments are required for development projects. This is an idea that was mooted in the early 1990s; it could well be exhumed for reconsideration now.[11]

Finally, all aspects of cultural life—creation, participation, enjoyment, understanding—depend on an educated and well-informed population. Education, meaning in this context everything from pre-school child care to life-long learning, is the foundation stone upon which a flourishing culture is built. Any cultural policy must not fail to recognise the importance of education in the arts particularly, and in the humanities more generally, in building a civilised society. The recommendations flowing from the 2020 Summit in regard to education in the arts provide a basis for doing this; they deserve to be given priority attention.

7.   Conclusion

To conclude I refer again to Stuart Cunningham's essay which I quoted at the start of this paper. In responding to critics who suggested that the cultural policy moment of the early 1990s was simply a reflection of the hubris of Labor in power, he ventured the opinion that "there is little reason to expect that engagement with cultural policy would become untenable under a conservative government in Australia" (Cunningham 1994, 5). No doubt his optimism was founded on the historical evidence—conservative governments of the past have been favourably disposed towards the arts and culture, and the development of policy initiatives in these areas has been by no means a Labor prerogative. And indeed John Howard, in reviewing his period in office, defended his government's record in the arts; in an interview with the *Bulletin* on February 20, 2006 Mr. Howard said, "we spend more money on the arts then we do on sport and that's even leaving aside the ABC… Now people will immediately say it's easier to get sports sponsorship than the arts. That may be right. It doesn't alter the fact that our financial support for the arts is actually greater than for sport."

Two observations can be made on the former Prime Minister's comment. First, it is significant that he chose sport as the point of comparison, as if the fact that spending more on the arts than on sport made it all alright. Second, his remarks were made in response to the question "Would you see at any time a Howard government looking at [a cultural policy]?" Mr. Howard's answer implied that for him a cultural