Refereed Paper

**Fringe to Famous: Bohemians, Entrepreneurs, Audiences and the Enabling State**

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**Abstract**
Since the 1980s, there has been an increasingly fertile cross-over between 'alternative' arts practice and popular culture industries. Yet this cross-over between what Pierre Bourdieu called the market of limited and extensive production is not new, and a recent historical study of Australian bohemia by this article’s co-author, identified a long tradition stretching back to the nineteenth century of creative practitioners circulating between small scale experimental initiatives in art and culture and the mainstream publishing, design, cinema, broadcasting and other cultural industries. The paper considers how this circulation between markets has been important for Australia's creative economy as an 'innovation system' and its contributed to the 'national dreaming' and other diverse forms of identity. In the context of the Federal Government's 2013 *Creative Australia* national cultural policy, the paper outlines a larger research project of identifying the institutional relationships and policy settings, which favour or inhibit translations for the margins to the mainstream, from fringe to famous.

**Biographies**
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Introduction
Since the 1980s, there has been an increasingly fertile cross-over between ‘alternative’ arts practice and popular culture industries in Australia. The always problematic binaries between art and mass culture have been complicated and blurred by a fragmentation of cultural production and consumption into an array of style-based youth subcultures and identity movements and a proliferation of ‘do-it-yourself’ independent media initiatives, beginning with public-access radio, multicultural television and ‘indie’ records in the 1980s and proceeding through fanzines, community TV, affordable mobile video and editing technology and on to internet-based interactive web sites, magazines, blogs, and social networking sites (Moore, 2012: 305–343; Wark, 1997). Over this period, large commercial cultural businesses, such as Virgin in the UK and Mushroom Records in Australia, have emerged out of small ‘independent’ cottage operations, while established public- and private-sector cultural entities such as the ABC and Fox Searchlight have reached out to alternative and grass-roots arts practice (Southern, 1995; Warner, 1998; Moore, 2012).

Punk iconoclasts of the 1980s such as Nick Cave and Paul Kelly have become national institutions and D Generation and the Chaser have leapt from university review to mass appeal. Across the Tasman, ‘trash’ filmmaker Peter Jackson took his obsession with cinéfantastique and his Wingnut Films into the heart of Hollywood. Cultural entrepreneurs have enabled this transaction across cultural fields, complicating the distinction between public and private by careers threading between the two sectors. At the same time, the division between artist and audience has been blurred by new digital technologies, especially the internet, that put the tools to create, curate and distribute culture into the hands of more and more people, breaking down the barriers between producers and consumers.

The exchange between small-scale experimental work and mainstream cultural industries deserves to be seen, in this context, as an important contributor both to Australia’s cultural life and to its economy. This double emphasis – on culture and economy – is an important one. It features as an aspiration of Creative Australia, the national cultural policy of the recent Federal Labor Government. In the introduction to the policy by then Minister for the Arts, Simon Crean, a recognition of the intrinsic value of arts and culture is closely interwoven with a recognition of their economic value. On the one hand, for Crean, ‘our culture defines us and we’re unique in the richness of our Australian identity’; on the other, we should also recognise an economic dividend: ‘A creative nation is a productive nation’ (Crean, 2013). Culture and economy are distinct, but also need to be seen closely intertwined.

Yet the double emphasis has also proven quite hard to sustain. Creative Australia deserves credit for escaping romantic binaries of art versus popular culture and for positioning the state an enabler of cultural innovation, diversity, social inclusivity and national identity. When it comes to actual programs, however, the policy betrays a continuing tendency to think of culture as outside the market. Its method remains a managerial preoccupation with top-down coordination, bureaucracy building and the doling out of grants. A similar tendency for culture and economy to separate, as if oil and water, can also be seen in the scholarly domain. It is now almost thirty years since Geoff Mulgan and Ken Worpole’s (1986) call to broaden the frame of analysis from
‘arts’ to ‘cultural’ policy, yet it has been hard to shake a tendency to see economic and cultural value systems as opposed. This tendency has, if anything intensified in recent years, in often heated arguments around the ‘creative industries’ paradigm (Garnham, 2005; Peck, 2005; Turner, 2011; Cunningham, 2011). Such arguments often seem to return us, again, to an opposition between romanticism and narrow economism.

This paper suggests the value of a historical perspective in reducing this opposition. We present the argument first by drawing on the recent work of Moore (2012) on an Australian bohemian tradition going back to the nineteenth century. This work reveals antecedents for the more recent crossover between ‘fringe’ and ‘famous’, allowing us to normalise this crossover as drawing on longstanding features of Australian cultural life. There is an established tradition in Australia of circulation between small-scale experimental initiatives in art and culture and mainstream publishing, design, theatre, cinema, broadcasting and other cultural industries. This tradition has included figures such as editor J.F. Archibald, poet and short story writer Henry Lawson, members of the Lindsay family of artists, poet and journalist Kenneth Slessor, visual artists/designers Thea Proctor and Jocelyn Rickards, critic and broadcaster Clive James, academic and polemicist Germaine Greer, satirist and actor Barry Humphries, film directors Tim Burstall and Bruce Beresford, cartoonist Martin Sharp and journalist and rock music author Lillian Roxon.

In the second part of the paper, we consider some of the ways this historical perspective may join with recent theoretical work on the relationship between culture and economy. While the references are mainly drawn from authors associated with the creative-industries paradigm, we also argue for a need to balance this with approaches that have retained an older ‘cultural’ emphasis. Finally, we return to an engagement with Creative Australia, sketching out some ways in which its general approach might be taken further by a fuller recognition of market relations as a productive force in cultural development. We suggest the need, in particular, for a less instrumental approach, with a focus on social contexts conducive to experimentation and risk-taking, from urban bohemia to fast broadband, public broadcasting outreach to licensing laws, and ask why some public and private institutions are open to cultures from the margins. We also consider how new media technology and education might be harnessed to ensure a more democratic engagement with the creativity of diverse communities.

The Australian Bohemian Tradition and Cultural Innovation

Moore’s (2012) history of Australian bohemia conceptualised it as a tradition re-inventing itself through time, using the label ‘bohemian’, and its ever-morphing cognates – various modernist avant-gardes, libertarians, ‘the underground’, counter-cultures, punks, indie – to help make sense of opportunities in the cultural market place. Defining this diversity of social and cultural practice as bohemian, and connecting it within a tradition required a sceptical attitude to artists’ romantic claims about themselves and their work. Most importantly, it was necessary to explain how the bohemian identity helped cultural producers make a living and a life. In doing so, this work drew on a materialist analysis of cultural production, that included Walter Benjamin, Bernard Smith, Raymond Williams, British cultural studies and especially Bourdieu to locate bohemian artists within the capitalist economy.

Bourdieu liked to look at artists as cultural entrepreneurs, who not only compete as individuals, movements and generations, but also amass and deploy capital (Bourdieu, 1993). But this capital is not money, as industrial capitalists wield, but cultural capital – the mix of knowledge, skills, contacts, style, personality traits, ideas, education and marketing savvy that enhances the raw talent gleaned from genetics and upbringing to make an artist not just good, but able to work and get noticed and work again. Cultural capital is enmeshed in media and reputation, and may become notoriety, fame and celebrity. Institutional arts managers and governments understand quantifiable enhancers of cultural capital like education and training, or galleries, theatre companies and TV stations, but can overlook equally important banks of cultural capital that are harder to measure or control.
To understand bohemia, it is necessary to explain the paradoxical commercial appeal of a discourse of escaping commercialism. Bohemianism can be defined as a collective strategy emerging from romanticism’s critique of industrial capitalism, in which cultural producers perform autonomy from market relations by transgressing the dominant bourgeois culture. Bohemians performed publicly an imagined, hoped for and sometimes achieved, personal autonomy from art markets that involved style, behaviour, art, social formations and even politics that transgressed and subverted, but never overturned, bourgeois society. In Australia from the 1860s, bohemian transgression was just as likely to be communicated by a resort to the Dionysian, aestheticism or the carnivalesque as by protest or avant-garde critique (Moore, 2004).

How does the identity benefit cultural producers? Bohemianism and avant-garde postures enhance the ‘cultural capital’ of emerging artists, journalists, writers and performers by carving out their distinction from established players and peers portrayed as less independent of commerce or other external constraints such as party politics or the state. Bourdieu has shown how the appearance of artistic independence from economic values can actually make the work more valuable to consumers by creating an aura of authenticity around their products that denied the reality of creation for commercial transaction (1980: 261–263).

Bohemian groups helped in more practical ways as well, by providing support networks and encouraging experiences that contributed to creative skills and cultural content, such as temporary transgression of the borders of bourgeois morality, social class, ethnicity, sexuality, even consciousness. It was a crucible where class and ethnic differences were hybridised. Bohemia and especially the more self-conscious avant-gardes are great ways for the unknown young artist to make contacts and generate a buzz in the city. Bohemias are escalators of social mobility, merging at one end with the demimonde and deviant, and at the other with the bourgeois customer and political class. The common bohemian pastimes of intense conversation, showing off, dining, drinking and drugging, and observation and experience of the urban spectacle, enhance networks and creativity. Yet unlike Richard Florida’s ‘bohemian’ index for a creative city, bohemia is not static and locked into a 1960s notion of café society in terms of style, but generationally changes its bricolage in order to remain transgressive of bourgeois culture (Florida, 2002). Emerging cultural players, are especially critical, even disrespectful, of earlier cohorts of bohemians aged into an establishment whose innovations, banalised into orthodoxy, they critique as obsolete and ‘inauthentic’.

Nor was it impossible for bohemian practice to leverage some real, if temporary, creative freedom. The tension between the illusion of autonomy and its occasional achievement is a constant in the Australian bohemian experience, with a succession of individuals and groups establishing oases of self-determination through ‘do-it-yourself’ little magazines and public or private patronage. Examples include Marcus Clarke’s Colonial Monthly in the late 1860s Melbourne, the Vision magazine of Jack Lindsay and Kenneth Slessor in 1920s Sydney, the underwriting of the modernist Angry Penguins magazine by the wealthy John and Sunday Reed in the 1940s, ‘underground’ publishing projects such as Oz and Thorunka in the 1960s and 1970s and the temporary structural separation from ABC management hierarchy granted to youth radio station 2JJ at its inception in 1975.1

In Australia, bohemians have played an important role in criss-crossing the boundaries between the popular and the avant-garde fields, in a way not considered by Bourdieu in his examination of nineteenth- and twentieth-century French cultural production and consumption. In the smaller Australian market, bohemians have over more than a century played a role analogous with that revealed by Simon Frith and Howard Horne in Art into Pop, their 1987 study of post war British art school bohemians. They argued for a symbiotic relationship between 1950s, 1960s and 1970s underground bohemian producers and the pop industries in Britain, emphasising the movement of artists from underground projects into popular music, film and fashion via the British art schools (Frith & Horne, 1987: 1–2, 12–16). They allowed far more agency for the art school
bohemians, who are not simply dupes of capitalism, but curious to probe and play with the consumerism all around them, and to shape, and in some instances subvert, commercial youth culture with bohemian values. A similar mobility can be observed across the Australian cultural fields (Moore, 2012).

Aesthetic innovation born of tolerance of transgression, risk taking, plurality and hybridity were honed in the bohemian spaces of independent publications, artists’ communities, inner-urban precincts, film collectives, experimental theatre and the inner-urban music scene, and then smuggled into commercial popular culture, and indeed politics. Romantic claims by artists to have created their works free of market imperatives ironically conferred value in parts of the bourgeois marketplace where consumers seek the distinction of categories like ‘avant-garde’, ‘alternative’, ‘underground’ or ‘indie’.

A minority acknowledged and played with this commercial reality, such as Marcus Clarke in the nineteenth century at the beginning of Australian bohemia, and sought to stand aloof from the commodification of their work by ironising it in their bohemianism and their texts. In the introduction to his collected columns, The Peripatetic Philosopher, Clarke confessed ‘I do not publish this volume because I have a “high moral purpose in view”; … I do not even publish it because I “feel that it will supply a long felt social want”; I publish it simply because it will SELL.’ (Clarke, 1869). This knowing mockery of complicity was evident in the showbiz satire of Barry Humphries and the ironic pessimistic anarchism of Moorhouse’s ‘futilitarian’ literature, and became more widespread in a late twentieth-century postmodern aesthetic satirising authenticity and revelling in artifice, kitsch and suburbia, for example in the work of Howard Arkley or postpunk poets of suburbia Mental As Anything.

But more common was a public assertion of autonomy from and disdain of the market, and the state – stressed through stories of fights with uncompromising editors, galleries and reviewers, failed projects, and accounts of material poverty, the embrace of anti-capitalist politics and suffering raids, arrest and imprisonment for defying laws against obscenity. Typical was the poet Henry Kendall, who called himself a ‘Wandering Bohemian’ and lamented that being ‘in the midst of a novel society … true genius on the arts remained unacknowledged’ and endured poverty to avoid being a ‘literary hack’, chained to ‘the cash register of commerce’ (Kendall, 1993: 184–186). More recently Robert Forster’s eulogy to Grant McLennan, his partner in 1980s ‘indie’ band The Go-Betweens, lamented the failure of the local commercial music industry to accept what was critically acclaimed in Europe: ‘We’d written six lauded albums and the band was broke … a mess we had brought on by trying to gain our freedom’ (2006: 52). This denial of complicity in the market, born of romanticism’s revolt against the commodification of art, was bohemia’s raison d’etre.

The reality was far more ambiguous and interesting. Even though these cultural rebels began their careers as outsiders, railing against establishment gatekeepers, a significant stream in Australia made good, converting notoriety into celebrity, respect, money and even power. The work of alternative artists was brought from niche to mainstream audiences by the active role of cultural entrepreneurs who were themselves bohemians moving between sectors and often changing independent, commercial and public cultural industries. In some cases, such as Gudinski’s Mushroom Records of the early 1970s, cottage industries became large commercial corporations. By nurturing a small business, the loyal countercultural market allowed the cultural entrepreneur to enjoy the bourgeois individualism of economic capitalism with the hip cover of providing ‘authentic’ and ‘alternative’ goods and services. But more commonly, an independent project burns brightly for a brief moment until funds and enthusiasm ebb in the face of commercial realities, legal action, the exhaustion of the original idea or attraction to new projects. This occurred with Australian and London Oz, Thorunka and the Yellow House art ‘happening’, but the ideas, aesthetics and personnel were embraced by mainstream cultural industries on the lookout for ‘street cred’ or the next big thing. (Moore 2012: 230–233, 235–238, 254–256, 259–260)
In the context of cultural policy development, it is important to acknowledge the role that innovative public intervention on the part of government played in these developments. Examples include the establishment of Australian Film Development Corporation by the Liberal/Country Party Government in 1970, the releasing of FM community-based licenses such as 3RRR and 4ZZZ and the creation of Double Jay by Labor Government Communications Minister Moss Cass in 1975. For Frith and Horne (1987), a crucial factor in Britain’s pop culture tapping bohemian identities and ideas was the publicly funded art school. Graduates of these art schools include John Lennon, Pete Townsend, Malcolm McClaren and Vivienne Westwood. This can also be seen in Australia with the prodigious talent emerging from East Sydney Technical College in the 1960s and 1970s, such as Martin Sharp, Jenny Kee, kooky cartoonist Reg Lynch and members of the postpunk band Mental As Anything, notably Chris O’Doherty, aka ‘Reg Mombassa’, a founding artist with surfwear label Mambo.

Likewise, the enabling role of the state in Australia provided conditions that nurtured fringe creativity, for example through art schools or outreach community radio, and in developing and distributing practitioners’ work for popular audiences, for example, the Australian Film Commission, the ABC and literary prizes (Moore, 2012). Many of Australia’s cultural innovators and entrepreneurs have enjoyed a symbiotic relationship with the public sector, developing content and audiences within state institutions as employees, consultants, contractors or patrons, while also participating in private-sector initiatives and commercial markets.

Crucially, audiences – especially as subcultures or a small community of devotees and friends – and not just ‘artists’ contribute to the value of art, especially when it is first being developed within fringe markets. Niche audiences within what Bourdieu (1996) calls the ‘field of limited production’ participate in the creation of artistic meaning, as fans or critics producing DIY subcultural styles and media such as ‘zines’ and blogs. The discipline of reaching a wider mass audience and responding to editorial processes has often brought improvements on the quality of work written only for a select group of peers.

For example Marcus Clarke’s For the Term of His Natural Life (1874), a critical success at the time and one of Australia’s most enduring classics from the colonial period, was first written in instalments for the commercial Australian Journal. This editorial discipline and need to appeal to a wide readership produced a work critically superior to and more popular than writing in his self-published, experimental periodicals. Kenneth Slessor’s popular, humorous verse ‘Darlinghurst Nights’, written on wages for the Packer paper Smith’s Weekly, an interwar pioneer of sensational big-city tabloid journalism, has been shown to have enhanced and enabled the modernism of his ‘serious’ poetry produced in the field of limited production, such as his iconic ‘Five Bells’ (Kirkpatrick, 1997). Far from leading to compromise or selling out, the shift from fringe to famous also shifts attention to audiences as important contributors to a work, and an important part of a cultural innovation system.

At certain times in Australia, the confluence of social and institutional supports for bohemian subcultures, commercial and public-sector outreach to alternative arts practitioners, and portals enabling audience participation as a community, led to periods connecting artistic achievement, popular audiences, and national self-expression. Examples can be observed in the literature, journalism and cartooning featured in the Bulletin in the 1890s, in cinema and literary publishing in the 1970s, and the Australian Broadcasting Corporation’s Triple J radio station, which played a similar role from the 1980s, parlaying inner-city youth ‘subcultural’ music and sensibilities to a larger national youth audience. Through such vectors, the bohemian aesthetics and often critical ideas of particular groups in particular times influenced subcultural and even national cultural identities.

Of course, the overlapping of the fields of limited and mass production was not just an Australian peculiarity, but an accelerating phenomenon throughout the West from the late 1960s, when counter-cultural experiments were quickly mass produced and
consumed in popular youth culture and bohemian identities themselves became the commodities. But the role of bohemia as a driver of fashionable consumerism does not preclude its capacity for subversion, for example by pushing to the extreme the individualism, hedonism, free expression and libertarian potential of capitalism that is routinely suppressed by the economy's need to reproduce itself through bureaucratic order, the work ethic and stable family life.

**Innovation in a Cultural Economy**

The historical study of bohemia in Australia demonstrates the problems in the binary that cuts ‘the arts’ off from other cultural production and the market, when in reality practitioners have mobility between so-called ‘high’ or ‘avant-garde’ and popular practice. Government policy is catching up with this reality, but has traditionally focused on ‘funding’, skills acquisition, training and the provision of business acumen to creative projects, rather than the social, public sector and entrepreneurial innovations that have historically nurtured emerging projects on the fringe, and enabled a crossover between ‘alternative’ and popular, often commercial practices. Government and researchers need to understand the social contexts of creative production and consumption – not merely bohemianism, but tertiary student life and its extra-curricula activities, youth subcultures, voluntary and paid work places, urban form, sexual and other identity groups, encounters between and hybridisation of ethnicities, Indigenous traditions, professional associations, political movements and electronic social networks. Other contexts to creativity include a humanities education, religion and transcendent experiences, travel, being multi-lingual, madness and veteran bohemian artist Mirka Mora's favourite – laziness, providing leisure to think and contemplate (Moore, 1997).

While such formations cannot be controlled, government and managerial action can enable some of them, and they can certainly be damaged or destroyed to the detriment of creativity in the community. For example, it seems unlikely that HECS debts, the ending of compulsory student contributions to campus unions and high rents that compel students to work a number of part-time jobs or live with their parents, have encouraged creativity on campus. The framework and enforcement of the regulatory regimes of copyright, defamation and obscenity or seditious laws can all cruel risk. More subtly, late twentieth-century managerial models that seek to account for and control all assets, beloved of the ABC, the Australia Council, and government film funders, can actually destroy cultural capital (Moore, 2001). While Creative Australia mentions ‘social investments’ and embraces the language of an enabling rather than controlling state, exemplified in the creation of a National Live Music Coordinator (2013:12), the worry is the managerial flow chart of coordination, government agencies and accords, which suggest an uncritical faith in government, an avalanche of forms and a mania for metrics.

Significant advances have occurred over the last decade, both in Australia and internationally, in the recognition and understanding of the productive linkages between cultural and economic development (Caves, 2000; Hartley, 2005a; Cunningham, 2006; Howkins, 2007; Anderson & Oakley, 2008; Flew, 2012). This linkage is also the bedrock of *Creative Australia*. It departs from more established approaches to cultural policy (for example, Throsby, 2001), which have tended to see cultural and economic value as divergent, such that attention to one will generally be at the expense of the other. As noted in the discussion of bohemia and creativity above, the idea of divergence can be traced to the attempt by writers and artists during the nineteenth century to define a sphere of autonomy for ‘art’, beyond economic calculations or political power.

The emerging hypothesis from the authors referred to above is that there are at least significant areas of consistency between cultural and economic development that has been driven in part simply by the growth of the cultural economy. But there have also been important theoretical developments in the attempt to think of culture and the economy within the same frame, in cultural history, creative industries and the cultural economy approaches. Creative industries theory, in particular, challenges such binaries, conceiving markets not simply as a means for distributing goods and services,
but as mechanisms for coordinating creativity and innovation. In this perspective, as Jason Potts frames it, 'the entrepreneur and the artist … are never far apart; both are agents of change and re-coordination' (2011: 21). Attention is brought to ‘the continuous and complex interaction between artistic and commercial realms and how this drives innovation in both’.

These insights open up considerable scope for further investigation. To date, however, there has been little grounded empirical research on cases from the recent past and little historical depth to the analysis of creative industries themselves. Creative-industries analysis, in particular, has tended to be strongly future oriented, drawing attention to emerging trends such as the increasing mobility of creative professionals (Florida, 2002), the growing importance of the design industries (Mitchell et al, 2003) or the rapid growth of information and communications technologies or ICTs (Castells, 1996) to suggest directions for policy or business strategy. While it has often demonstrated historical erudition (Hartley, 2005b), history has generally been used only to contextualise the emergence of creative industries. There has been little historical depth to the analysis of creative industries themselves.

The limited historical case study approaches that have been undertaken mitigate some of the antagonism that has developed around a perceived takeover of cultural policy by a ‘business school’ discourse whose only object is economic returns. These have the potential to re-balance the focus from an economic analysis of culture towards a cultural analysis of the economy. A particular inspiration in this context is Frith and Horne’s (1987) Art into Pop, in which the authors emphasised the importance of the public sector in this crossover. In Australia, since the 1980s, many of the most significant cultural entrepreneurs have worked at the intersection of publicly funded and commercial domains, an extension of an earlier trend driven by the increase in outsourcing, freelancing and ‘portfolio careers’ in the service and cultural industries. They have enjoyed a symbiotic relationship with the public sector, developing content and audiences within state institutions as employees, consultants, contractors or patrons, while also participating in private-sector initiatives and commercial markets.

An accommodation is required between the ‘cultural economy’ approach and more recent ‘creative industries’ theorisations. It is misleading to represent the latter as committed to a neo-liberal ideology of small government, deregulation and laissez faire. They draw on an innovation policy framework that sees a significant role for government in mapping and coordinating innovation, and creating or facilitating linkages where they are weak or absent. The framework is a ‘value-driven orientation to productivity rather than a cost-efficiency driver for intervention and in that sense it is in contrast to micro-economic rationales for change and reform’ (Cunningham 2008: 1). It has been associated with a focus on emerging industries that exhibit innovation, investments in education and attempts to widen the benefits of connectivity through improvements in digital literacy. There is, therefore, considerable room for agreement over the positive role of government in cultural and economic development.

The creative industries literature has drawn attention to the ways in which the interactivity of digital media is changing the relation between ‘producers’ and ‘consumers’, increasing the importance of audiences in the creative process and opening the way for ‘user-led innovation’ (Hartley, 2004; Humphreys et al, 2005). Far from leading to compromise or selling out, the shift from fringe to famous also shifts attention to audiences as important contributors to a work, and an important part of a cultural innovation system. Audience interactivity is correctly emphasised in Creative Australia in relation to the National Broadband Network (NBN), but we need to think more boldly about how to reduce barriers of education and entitlement that inhibit working-class adults from moving from being new-media consumers to arts and media professionals.

This notion of a two-way exchange is clearly at odds with those for whom any movement from the fringe to the mainstream will always be a 'sell-out' or betrayal of artistic integrity. However, such hardened romanticism is less common than is
sometimes suggested in advocacy for creative industries. In a recent interview-based study, O’Connor et al. (2011) found that artists in Australia have become increasingly accustomed to the intersection of culture and business, seeing little need to distinguish between ‘the arts’ and the ‘creative industries’. Overstating the critique of romanticism risks a needless alienation of those who wish only to retain some distinction between cultural and economic value. Respecting the texture and density of cultural forms can address concerns about a tendency for creative industries approaches to ‘casually engulf the arts’ in business discourses, or ‘wash over their points of difference’ (Archer, 2009: 1). Such an approach can contribute to a more constructive and collaborative approach to the challenges in Australia of the increasing convergence between culture and economy, while emphasising the social context of cultural innovation.

**Creative Australia: Managerial Versus Democratic Cultural Policy**

Having laid out the historical conditions in which creativity emerged in the meandering careers of arts practitioners, we now return to the more recent policy framework and some of its shortcomings. *Creative Australia*’s explicit shift from the old elite notion of ‘arts’ to the more inclusive and diverse notion of ‘culture’, embracing the popular and folk as well as classical and avant-garde, the totality of media old and new, genres high and low, and creative industries and audience participation, is long overdue and offers a genuine opportunity to change direction. Yet when it comes to actual dollars, traditional bourgeois ‘arts’ continue to receive a lion’s share of funding. This would suggest that despite the rhetoric, the last Federal Labor Government found it hard to resist the special pleading of powerful legacy arts companies, or to jettison Keating-era elitism that sees artists as a special caste and divides them off from the rest of us. *Creative Australia* wants the state to encourage diversity of channels of production and distribution, and equity in access and participation, but remains wedded to an instrumental and bureaucratic approach that will at best mirror the elite pluralism of the Hawke era – it even uses the word ‘accord’ (2013: 78).

An alternative, more democratic approach, would be to encourage within public and private institutions those intangible networks that build cultural capital and audiences. In order to spread creativity around, the dichotomy of artist and philistine masses, diminished in *Creative Australia*, can be replaced with an appreciation of the creativity of popular cultural forms, craft skills, and the role of audiences in creating value for art. In this context, the National Broadband Network is a potential game-changer, and its economic implications for cultural policy are acknowledged in *Creative Australia* (2013: 111). But more is at stake than just economic growth. For content producers, self-curating their songs, satire, poetry or short stories on YouTube, Facebook or Twitter, the internet is the contemporary theatre, community hall, Mechanics Institute, or School of the Air, TV network, journal, radio and fanzine all rolled into one. Already a space for niche subcultural aesthetics, fast, participatory broadband promises to set the stage for our national dreaming, just as did innovations in the press such as the Bulletin in the 1880s and in cinema in the 1970s.

Today the bohemian tool-kit of aesthetic, media and identity play is potentially open to all. In place of the passive arts consumer, we want to emphasise the idea of all people as creative producers – an updating of the William Morris idea of do-it-yourself arts and crafts for the Digital Age. Youth subcultures, such as culture jammers, hippies, punks and community hobbyist organisations, have sought to empower people to make their own art, from folk and rock ’n’ roll bands, to ‘indie’ record labels, to amateur dramatics, YouTube videos and blogs. Cheap, interactive media technologies have the potential to enfranchise a do-it-yourself creative culture in the suburbs.

Sylvia Lawson (1987) has shown that it was an interactive dialogue with the Bulletin’s readership in the cities and the bush that created a passionate community around the project in the late nineteenth century, and produced some of the magazine’s best writers. Its founding editor, J. F. Archibald, argued that everyone has at least one good yarn, poem or drawing in them, and he put his money where his mouth was, inviting contributions from ordinary folk and paying published contributors. It tapped into
shearing sheds, docks and pubs, unearthed house-painter-cum-poet Henry Lawson, Miles Franklin and kindled perhaps our most interesting novel, Joseph Furphy’s Such is Life.

The Australian Broadcasting Corporation has the potential to play an analogous role in our present day cultural and civic life. The ABC, imagined as a ‘town square’ under Managing Director Mark Scott, has moved decisively into narrowcasting with the introduction of three new digital channels (Scott, 2009: 10). The next stage could be enhanced interactivity between program makers and audience using new digital technology and ABC Online. The new Triple Jay ‘Unearthed’ digital radio network and website, that enables unsigned independent bands to air their music to a national audience, illustrates the potential of true participatory media. This can break down the barrier between producers and consumers that characterised the paternalist paradigm that public broadcasters know best. Building on its own pioneering efforts in audience-generated content such as Beat Box and Race Around the World, ABC TV might find more success in building audiences if it followed the Unearthed model on ABC TV and allowed audiences to shape content still further via the internet, commenting on pilot programs and even offering up their own pilots for comment, YouTube style.

Rather than the old paternalist model of public broadcasting the new digital channels of the ABC and SBS could be the medium by which the diverse creative energy in the community, from suburban garages to inner-city garrets, can be siphoned into a civic and cultural commons. But in the suburbs, young people are assembling multi-identities from the material surrounding them as they grow up – the immigration experience, family, religion and politics, sexual options, global TV, the internet, blogs, music culture and neighbourhood. Cultural diversity – ethnic, lifestyle, regional, religious – is the great narrative of contemporary Australian life. Australia can ensure that young people from working class and other marginalised backgrounds have the opportunity to develop their creative potential and contribute to the new cultural economy. This is where a National Cultural Policy and a national arts curriculum can move Labor’s ‘Education Revolution’ beyond an instrumental obsession with money, buildings, computers and trades. The British Art School system helped translate generations of working and middle class kids who did not fit into scholarly or technical education into commercial designers, pop musicians, filmmakers, fashion gurus and artists. Skilled up and entitled for creative entrepreneurship and expression, working class sensibilities can change a national culture.

Creative Australia pledged ‘an arts education for all in schools … to ensure that every student, from Foundation to the end of primary school, will study the arts in a rigorous and sequential process’ (2013: 16, 78). This mainstreaming of arts and creativity across ‘five art forms’ within the curriculum is to be welcomed, but the emphasis seems to be about studying the creativity of those designated artists (a worthy initiative to be sure), rather than students being creative themselves. It is through the provision of a robust suite of extra-curricula arts programs including music tuition and performance, theatre, film making and visual arts that many non-Government and a handful of state selective schools ensure most of their students have hands-on and rigorous experience of creativity.

How would Creative Australia ensure the majority of public primary and comprehensive secondary school children receive equal financial investment in extra-curricula arts? The report is silent on the all-important investment of cultural and social capital that non-government and selective state schools can call upon from their communities, an asset which commonly eludes instrumentalist arts blueprints. How might schools enhance and develop not just the skills to make music, screen culture or visual art, but also impart the sense of entitlement to produce and indeed professionalise arts practice? While non-government schools have historically excelled at imparting entitlement of all sorts to their pupils, the well-meaning rhetoric that seeks to advance the case for public schools because they are ‘disadvantaged’ may have the opposite effect on children, disempowering them instead of giving agency.
Creative Australia’s provision of $8.1 million for a ‘Creative Young Stars Program’, to ‘encourage, support and celebrate creative, academic and community achievement in every federal electorate’ suggests that an elitist hierarchy continues to shape government thinking about the production of art (2013: 15, 105). An historical preference for ‘picking winners’ by providing grants to those already identifying as artists via bodies like the Australia Council or funding elite performance companies or arts-training institutions such as the Australian Film, Television and Radio School, and the National Institute of Dramatic Art, has skewed Australian arts and media practice towards those already with bourgeois habitus and rich in cultural capital, to use Bourdieu’s terms. This shows in too much work that fails to negotiate and reflect the class and ethnic complexity of Australia – though this is challenged by writers of hybridity like Christos Tsiolkas, and increasingly the impact of work by Indigenous artists across media and against the odds. But the mainstream and avant-garde arts scenes against which exceptions are measured remains ‘white’ and bourgeois. Creative Australia provides $20.8 million in funding for what it terms ‘elite training organisations’ a 30 per cent increase in base funding to ‘ensure they continue to provide leadership’ (2013: 72). The trick is to recognise elite professional training and grants as the apex of the pyramid, but to build on a foundation of democratic creativity enabled through the public education system.

Veteran art historian Bernard Smith asked this of a Blue Poles–smitten Whitlam Government back in the 1970s (Smith, 1988: 7) and it is even more relevant today in this age where the internet and new digital tools promise to make us all ‘produsers’ (Bruns, 2008). The great Australian cricketers and swimmers arose from a vibrant participation of all kids in school and local team sport. Bernard Smith reckoned everyone is an artist, just as we can all play sport, and recommended that government intervention be directed into energising arts instruction in public schools, including fine art, creative writing, music and so on. Most kids love to draw, paint, sing and tell jokes, but their natural talent and inclination gets knocked out of them as they move through high school, and learn to consume rather than make. ‘If your object is excellence’, Smith observed, ‘you begin with a broad base: elitism fails because it insists upon a narrow base; its apex fails to reach the limits of the possible’ (1988: 7).

Conclusion
In this article we have argued for the value in cultural policy formation of an historical perspective drawing on the cultural materialist approaches of creative cultural production and distribution. An examination of Australian bohemians, avant-gardes and counter-cultures provides a useful side-light on recent theoretical work on the economic basis of practices commonly identified as art. Significantly for cultural policy, this approach reveals the social and institutional contexts that enable creativity and identities within small niche markets and their translation into broader popular, even nationally iconic forms. Cultural entrepreneurs circulating between private and public creative industries, small- and large-scale production, perform a catalytic role in nurturing and commercialising cultural innovation. The important role that state institutions, such as the ABC, play as a vector between fringe and famous suggests the important role public cultural and educational agencies might play in developing and distributing the creativity of citizens. However, building a more participatory, social democratic arts practice requires a greater understanding by government of social context and cultural capital, not least of class and the limitations of structural elitism, than that found in Creative Australia.

Endnotes:
i. Marcus Clarke raised the capital to purchase the Australian Magazine, re-christened the Colonial Monthly, in March 1868 with himself as editor. The project was distinctive from other short-lived literary magazines at this time for the inter-colonial and trans-Tasman extent of its ambition and its role as a magnet for Melbourne’s first generation of literary bohemians (Moore, 2012: 20–24, 34). Vision was a Sydney literary quarterly launched 1923 by three tyro editors Jack Lindsay, Kenneth Slessor and Frank Johnson.
While critical of capitalist mass culture, Vision also wanted freedom for artists from
government and its bureaucracy, and criticised socialism as the leveling creed of the
mediocre (Moore, 2012: 136–139). Like Vision, Angry Penguins was one of nearly fifty
‘little magazines’ published in Australia, between 1920 and 1950. Angry Penguins was
launched in 1940 under the editorship of Communist Party-leaning radical writer Max
Harris, to encourage debate about modernism in Australia, especially surrealism. In
1964 Oz sprang from the frustration of its editors – Richard Neville, Richard Walsh and
Martin Sharp – as consumers and aspiring journalists just graduating from university
papers, at how out-of-touch the stories and aesthetics of the mainstream media
seemed with the ideas and aesthetics of young people. The limits of autonomy were
powerfully asserted when the three editors were charged, tried and briefly jailed for
publishing obscenity, before an appeal overturned the judgment on the basis of the
magazine’s literary merit. When the Whitlam Government established a Contemporary
Radio Unit for young people within the ABC in 1975, Communications Minister Moss
Cass insisted that the new station be autonomous from the national broadcaster’s
management hierarchy. A quasi- ‘collective’ staff decision-making process was agreed
to, which was a boon for creative freedom at 2JJ until a more formal structure was
introduced in 1978.

ii. While affecting the style of a Wildean dandy and aesthete, Humphries and many of
the characters featured in his monologues satirise the disjuncture between altruistic
and idealistic rhetoric and base personal motivations such as craving fame, wealth or
power. Likewise Frank Moorhouse explored Australian protesters’ love–hate
relationship with America, and the wholesale adoption of American styles of dissent to
campaign against US imperialism was gently ironised in his 1972 short-story collection
explosion, art-school students Mental As Anything played with the picket fences, school
socials and weatherboards of the suburbs; their record covers, vivid music videos and
posters were adorned with sprinklers and lawnmowers. In the early 1980s the band was
a seminal influence on the ‘pomo’ revaluing of the suburban iconography as a source of
irony and romance, and of the disposable pleasures of pop culture, evident in songs

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