

AASA

Association of Architecture Schools of Australasia

30 April, 2008

Review of the National Innovation System –
Submission
Secretariat to the Expert Panel,
Review of the National Innovation System,
Department of Innovation, Industry, Science and Research,
GPO Box 9839
CANBERRA,
ACT 2601

Dear Sir or Madam,

Attached to this letter is a submission to the Review of the National Innovation System on behalf of the Association of Architecture Schools of Australasia (AASA).

The AASA is an unincorporated association representing accredited architecture programs in Australia. It aims to provide leadership and advocacy for architectural education in Australasia. Among its objectives is to identify, develop and support research, scholarship and creative work in relation to architecture and the design environment in the context of architectural education, and welcomes the opportunity to contribute to this Review of the National Innovation System.

We affirm the central role of innovation in the education and practice of the discipline of architecture and related professions, especially for a generation faced with the exigencies of climate change. It is estimated that built environment industries contribute 23% of greenhouse gas emissions, and that innovation in education and architectural practice are urgently required to promote sustainable building practices.

Declaration of Interests and Affiliations:

Members of the AASA received grants from several government sources, including the Australian Research Council, and several of its members are partners in CRC's.

Yours sincerely

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**Review of the National Innovation System
Department of Innovation, Industry, Science and Research**

Submission

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The terms of reference for the Review of the National Innovation System raise several issues affecting the education of architects and the promotion of innovative professional practice of architecture in the community.

Architectural innovation proceeds through projects, processes, practice, and post-professional education.

The Association of Architectural Schools of Australasia (AASA) wishes to contribute the following comments:

1.0 Innovation in architecture often proceeds from the energy and enthusiasm of young academics and research architects. The infrastructure for supporting new career researchers in architectural schools in universities requires extensive review, noting the lack of financial and career incentives for young architects wishing to pursue innovative design theory, historical research or technical endeavours. The lack of funds for salaries and study grants for young career researchers has led to widespread abandonment of research laboratories and supporting research centres within Australian universities within the last twenty years. At a time when research into buildings relevant to the needs of a sustainable built environment is critical to the future of Australia, investment in architecture schools and university research centres relevant to architectural research is urgently required.

2.0 The main objectives of the Australian Postgraduate Awards (APA) program are stated in Commonwealth Government documents as firstly, to support postgraduate research training in the higher education sector; and secondly, to provide financial support to domestic postgraduate students of exceptional research promise who undertake their higher degree by research at an eligible Australian higher education provider. APA stipend rates for 2008 are \$20,007 for full-time students and \$10,710 for part-time students. The stated objectives of the APA program are not being met by these funding rates for full or part-time students. A dramatic increase, even to doubling of APA rates is required to attract students in the architectural community interested in pursuing innovative research at masters or doctoral postgraduate levels.

3.0 The context of innovation for the architecture of our cities is the global nature of architectural practice. Innovative educational practices are required to inform architecture students of their global reach and responsibilities. The internationalization of Australian architectural programs leads to innovative architectural practices, and these require support for visitors and collaborative international programs and workshops, as well as loan programs for students seeking to attend international workshops, conferences, and training in overseas architectural practices. Currently, there are barriers to student access to such programs. HECS arrangements for architecture students seeking travel loans in order to attend conferences and workshops are dependent on enrollment in a foreign institution, highly restricting their overseas study options. Grants for visiting scholars and researchers are also highly limited. Other models, such as that

run by the British Council for visitors, are worthy of investigation to assist the overcoming of barriers to the internationalization of architectural education programs in Australia. As for many European programs sharing the 'Erasmus' system, every Australian architecture or planning student should spend one semester of their studies in exchange in an overseas university, and innovative loan and support programs are required to ensure this.

4.0 The promotion of high quality innovative architecture is greatly hampered by the procurement practices of State and Federal Governments, especially those promoted by the Commonwealth Department of Finance and Deregulation, recently called into question by the Government Architect of Victoria, Mr John Denton, and by Richard Johnson, the RAIA Gold Medal recipient of 2008. Other models of procurement generate greater innovation towards a sustainable architecture, such as the competition model of government procurement common in Scandinavian countries. These are widely attributed to the broad cultural support for innovation in architecture, and to the excellence of architecture outcomes for communities and cities.

5.0 Innovation in solutions for affordable housing in Australian cities is limited by the lack of housing research capabilities within the architecture and planning communities. Greater funding of housing and industry collaborations, notable on the model of ARC linkage grants, are encouraged. Innovation in housing requires the linking of practice to research and industry to government, if cultural change in attitudes to housing and to cities is to be promoted. Innovative and proven models, such as that developed by the Building Better Cities programs most associated with former Deputy Prime Minister Brian Howe, are worthy of recovering for establishing innovations for Australia's housing needs.

6.0 Innovation in architectural works is most often through design. The recognition of design as an innovate research practice is encouraged as legitimate research, and recognized in the publications of the AASA.

7.0 Research funding models promoted by the Australian Research Council tend to establish competitive rather than collaborative practices between Australian universities. These put up barriers to innovation, and incentives for both local and international collaboration are required in research funding arrangements for Universities. Innovative research is dependent upon the interaction of research and education programs, rather than their conception as institutional silos. The AASA recognizes recent efforts by the ARC to remove some of these barriers, especially regarding international collaboration.

8.0 Innovative research into cities requires investment in urban infrastructure development, especially of transportation. Australia needs to re-build its independent research capabilities in the areas of planning, urban infrastructure and transportation through public rather than industry or corporation sponsored research organizations. The integration of post-professional education should be established as part of this re-building. Funding for innovative demonstration projects are recommended, especially those that draw together different areas of research expertise.

For further information, please contact:

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