

Professor Brian Schmidt AC FAA FRS
Vice Chancellor & President
The Australian National University
Canberra ACT 2601
vc@anu.edu.au



Cc: ea.vc@anu.edu.au
vc@anu.edu.au
rae.frances@anu.edu.au
paul.pickering@anu.edu.au
org.change@anu.edu.au
millan.pintos-lopez@anu.edu.au
CHEYNE@parliament.act.gov.au

2 December 2020

Dear Professor Schmidt,

RE: Proposed cuts to the ANU School of Art and Design

The Australian Art Craft and Design Centres (ACDC) write in response to the proposed cuts to the ANU School of Art and Design.

ACDC is a group of independent organisations from all states and territories in Australia that represent the professional craft and design sector. The organisations engage with the sector at a local, national and international level and offer services and programs that support sustainable practice. The ACDC network is dedicated to supporting craftspeople, designers and makers at every stage of practice, and is deeply concerned that the proposed cuts could not only see ANU's proud legacy and influence diminished, but also have a profoundly negative impact on our national craft and design community.

ACDC organisations play a vital role in the development of Australia's visual arts, craft and design industry. They are pivotal to community enrichment by engaging audiences with visual arts, craft and design, ideas and diverse cultural practices. Through their exhibitions, touring, festivals, residencies, retail activities, publishing, public and education programs, and support of artists through these means, our organisations inspire participation in conversations about the world in which we live. They promote learning, foster critical thinking and encourage creative expression in ways that benefit local economies, change lives and impact positively on community health and wellbeing. From debuting the work of emerging artists and supporting their career pathways, to presenting the work of leading Australian and International artists to local audiences through touring exhibitions, our organisations punch well above their weight. With our enterprising business models and cross industry partnerships, we believe that the craft and design ecology has key insights and learnings to share with the tertiary education sector and beyond.

We are able to do all of these things because of the high calibre of practitioners emerging from art and design schools across the country. The proposed cuts (as outlined in the Managing Change document circulated to industry) will significantly devalue the School of Art and Design's well-deserved global reputation for excellence, and severely limit the opportunities on offer for graduates. We appreciate that University Art & Design Schools have experienced significant challenges over many years and especially in 2020. This includes pressures to homogenise teaching and learning practice such as reductions in teaching hours, limited access to facilities and research. These reductions will have a specific impact on the quality in the next generation of craftspeople and designers. Our community and our nation will be worse off for it. The closure of universities and schools, and cessation of face-to-face teaching and learning during Covid-19 has compounded an issue that has long existed for the craft and design sector, namely, the diminution of educational and vocational opportunities.



The ANU School of Art and Design has a unique focus on craftsmanship of the designer-maker, derived from the Bauhaus atelier model of art and design education. Since its inception, the School has evolved and embraced the shifts in contemporary craft and design practice, most notably with sustainable design development, supporting the growing demand for a new mode of practice in small-scale Australian manufacturing and creative industries.

The School of Art is very much at the centre of this focus to support specialist craft workshops producing generations of graduates working in Ceramics, Textiles, Glass, Furniture and Gold and Silversmithing. These graduates serve as ambassadors for ANU, furthering the reputation of Australian craft and design within the global arts community.

To our collective dismay, we note that across the nation over the past several years tertiary providers have moved to reduce teaching hours, workshop time and acclaimed faculty. Whilst we are well aware of the challenges faced by the academy, to realign with standardised university cost structures and research output requirements, the result for the creative sector has been to diminish the accessibility and quality in workshop based practice, leaving Schools and niche courses vulnerable.

Whilst we understand the difficult position that ANU currently faces and acknowledge this is not unique within the higher education sector, the ACDC would like to strongly urge ANU to reconsider its proposal. We would welcome an online meeting with the ACDC network and ANU to gain a national perspective on the impact of the proposed changes. We encourage you to champion a process of collaboration via design thinking and co-design with the sector to assist and inform ANU in the complex decision making required to chart the future of the School of Art and Design. This process will be especially valuable in the context of persistent threats to the tertiary education and arts sectors and will deliver lasting benefits to both your institution and our community.

The importance of having a university institution providing guidance, critical inquiry and a community of support within a studio practice setting cannot be underestimated. The practitioners that emerge from ANU's Art and Design School have a refinement and professionalism that is only achieved through this tertiary experience.

Your sincerely,

Claire Sourgnès | **artisan**

Claire Beal | **Design Tasmania**

Rachael Coghlan | **Craft ACT**

Julie Skate | **Canberra Glassworks**

Emma Fey | **Guildhouse**

Brian Parkes | **JAM FACTORY**

Lisa Cahill | **Australian Design Centre**

Bryony Nainby | **Craft Victoria**

Antonia Syme | **Australian Tapestry Workshop**

Lynda Dorrington | **FORM**

Bronwyn Field | **Central Craft**