



Australian Government

Chief Scientist

PROFESSOR IAN CHUBB AC

**LAUNCH OF *MAPPING THE HUMANITIES* and WELCOME
TO PROFESSOR GRAEME TURNER FAHA**

Partners in a stronger Australia

28 OCTOBER 2014

12:30 – 1:30pm

NATIONAL PRESS CLUB

CANBERRA

It is a great pleasure to mark the launch of *Mapping the Humanities, Arts and Social Sciences in Australia*.

Some may argue it falls outside my empire as Australia's Chief Scientist – or more politely, my sphere of influence.

I would argue that every scientist ought to take an interest in the humanities – just as the humanities ought to be informed by science.

If I can take a leaf from a scholar of the arts – the playwright Bertolt Brecht:

Art and science work in quite different ways: agreed. But the great and complicated things that go on in the world cannot be adequately recognized by people who do not use every possible aid to understanding.

If we needed an example, Ebola would easily supply it.

So I am not here to stake out Graeme's turf, but instead to reiterate the things I said in my Strategy for Australian Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (or STEM):

The social sciences and the humanities will underpin a creative and innovative Australia; and it is only in this context that STEM can be effective.

My focus is STEM, but STEM working for and with the community, connected by trust and mutual obligation.

And so I am deeply interested in the capabilities that the humanities and social sciences bring to the task.

How **do** we make sure we're doing all the things that we need to do well?

There is plenty of data scattered in many reports.

But I think that in Australia we tend to duck the truly hard questions. We live in the thin fog of complacency generated by the 'she'll be right' approach, or the 'no worries' motto or the 'we punch above our weight' cliché.

None of them are useful. And all of them in some way suggest that we can muddle through - because we have so far. And I find that a tad alarming.

The fact is, we can't be timid or lazy – in STEM, HASS, or any part of our shared enterprise. We need to evaluate, manage and take some risk. And today we need to do it all on a scale that we have never bothered with before. We need to be bold.

The end we seek is a stronger Australia – a nation prepared for the very great challenges we must expect to confront.

So to put it all simply, let's understand our solid foundation, work out what to do, and get better.

That's why, for some time now, my office has been working on a comprehensive report that will provide, some sensible thought-provoking but broad indications of Australia's performance in STEM.

It is also why I welcomed this mapping project when the President of the Academy of the Humanities, Professor Lesley Johnson first conceived it, and when Professor Graeme Turner agreed to lead it.

I was pleased to contribute to the project; and I am honoured to launch it today – not as an end in itself, but as a means to the end we all aspire to: a stronger Australia.

About Graeme.

He is the founding Director of the Centre for Critical and Cultural Studies, and one of the leading figures in cultural studies in Australia and internationally.

He is also a past president of the Australian Academy of the Humanities (2004-2007), an ARC Federation Fellow (2006-2011) and I note only the second humanities scholar to serve on the Prime Minister's Science, Engineering and Innovation Council, which as many of you know has a different form on my advice.

That is a testament to the respect he enjoys in both the STEM and HASS communities, and the efforts he has made to bridge the divides.

He will ask us some hard questions today, and no doubt face some of yours in turn.

Ladies and gentlemen, Professor Graeme Turner.