

ACUADS MEDIA RELEASE

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ARTS EDUCATION CRISIS DEEPENS AS SOUTHERN CROSS UNIVERSITY CUTS ALL CREATIVE ARTS PROGRAMS

The Australian Council of University Art and Design Schools (ACUADS) warns that Southern Cross University's decision to eliminate all creative arts programs signals a national crisis in arts education that demands immediate federal intervention.

The erosion of creative arts in Australian higher education runs counter to creativity being recognised by the World Economic Forum as a top essential skill for the future of work. "This closure is not an isolated incident but evidence of systematic devaluation of arts education in Australia," says Associate Professor Charles Robb of QUT's School of Creative Arts. "We've seen a devastating 24% drop in Year 12 arts subject enrolments nationally over the past decade, with Queensland experiencing an alarming 44% decline."

The decision to cut contemporary music, digital media, and art and design programs at SCU comes amid growing concerns about government policies that actively discourage arts enrolment through fee structures and education frameworks that marginalise creative subjects.

"This isn't about natural market forces - it's the direct result of misguided policies that fail to recognise how the arts enrich our society through cultural, social and personal contributions – as well as their economic ones," says Associate Professor Robb. "The arts are increasingly treated as non-essential fields, despite creativity being identified as a fundamental capability in our national curriculum. This short-sighted approach ignores how arts education develops exactly the problem-solving and lateral thinking skills that employers consistently tell us they need."

ACUADS is calling for urgent action from Federal Education Minister Jason Clare to:

1. Work with state-based university admission processes to revise subject scaling processes that disadvantage students who study arts subjects
2. Address the Job-ready Graduates package fee disparities that make creative arts degrees significantly more expensive than teaching or nursing degrees
3. Strengthen federal support for regional creative education as a driver of local economic and cultural development
4. Ensure sustainable funding for diverse creative arts programs across Australia's university sector.

The SCU closure will significantly impact Lismore's cultural vitality and post-flood recovery efforts while contributing to a broader contraction of Australia's cultural sector.

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This release is made on behalf of the ACUADS Executive Board. ACUADS, the Australian Council of University Art and Design Schools, is the peak national body representing art and design in higher education. ACUADS is an incorporated, not-for-profit association of Heads of Schools and Executive Leadership from the Australian art and design tertiary education sector. ACUADS was founded in 1981.

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