

My name is [REDACTED]. I am artist and cultural historian currently working the Fine Art department at Monash University. I have shown my work in world class cultural institutions across Australia, Europe and the Middle East, published four academic books as well as receiving prizes for my work.

I am writing a submission as I feel strongly about the context of the art and cultural sector of Australia, both as a practitioner and educator. As mid-career artist with a PhD in practice led research and who majored in Glass, I have had a wonderful career that has seen me work on fellowships in the ancient universities of Europe to the most innovative of art schools in the developing world. A year and half ago I returned to Australia to take up a role as Senior Lecturer in Fine Art at Monash University, my alma mater.

I have been tasked with revitalising offerings in glass at my university, a task I both relish and fear. I speak with colleagues in industry who talk about having to close their operations when a staff member is sick. While many students would relish the opportunity to work in industry, their training is far from adequate. Who would have thought that a city like Melbourne could have a shortage glass blowers? I know from colleagues in other industries that they face similar skills shortages.

The defunding of higher education has necessitated a move to more interdisciplinary models for art schools to survive. Where I received six semesters of training within a glass major, current offerings at the small handful of art schools that offer glass generally provide just one semester's instruction. Even with creative means, like using internships for the keenest students this might amount to two semester's training.

Where once fields like studio glass thrived, they are today in decline. While glass blowers in industry are desperate for more staff, they often do not have the means to take on untrained apprentices which would be more of a strain than a boon to them. This creates a gap between higher education and the training it can provide and what is needed to run a craft or design business.

Such a chicken and egg scenario is fuelling a decline in the glass sector, which is ironic given that there are a number of viable businesses and large-scale demand from the design and architecture sectors for glass blowing services. Further funding for training is vital to the continuation of a viable sector moving into the future, as well as the continued cultural life of this country.

Kind regards,

[REDACTED]