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I spend a lot of my time analysing and advocating for the critical place of creativity in our economy. These figures are no doubt familiar to all of you - we contribute more than \$31bn to our economy or 3.3% of GDP this is a higher contribution than that of agriculture, forestry & fishing.

The creative industries are also at the forefront of the new business models and ideas that must become standard operating procedures for businesses in the 21st century. We know a lot about operating in this new commercial world order than many other industries and businesses. For example:

- We know about developing, managing and exploiting intellectual property
- We know about collaborative consumption and the rise of the service economy
- We know about marketing and promotion; telling stories and creating narratives to build brands, audiences and followers;
- We know about working in digital mediums in a digital world;
- We know how to foster innovation and encourage employees to participate in the creation of product and involvement in product or service design
- We know about problem solving– be it creative, design-led, innovative, conceptual, end-to-end, deep dive or whatever is the fashionable term of the moment.

These are all skills that Australian businesses need to adopt. And increasingly they are looking to our creative professionals to help them.

Whilst the creative industries direct employment is estimated to be around 270,000. If we count creative's working outside the creative industries the figures are close to half a million and growing.

The challenges being faced by our economy will require a different set of solutions than have been applied previously and this is where the role of creativity comes in. If we are to be a truly prosperous country then an investment in our minds not just our mines is essential.

But this isn't what I am going to focus on today – I want to cover an area that has had less air time and is about the contribution creative professionals play in reducing the cost pressure on other sectors of our economy – in particular on the cost of health care.

To illustrate this I'm going to tell you two stories, both located in a hospital setting, both dealing with pain and suffering and both involving artists. The first is about Heather Frahn, musician and sound therapy artist who runs the Sound for Relaxation program at the Flinders Medical Centre in Adelaide. She spends up to an hour taking patients into states of relaxation using Tibetan singing bowls, guitar, wooden flutes and her voice. Last year she worked with a woman (we could call her Barbara), on the ward who had advanced cancer and was in palliative care. Over a period of weeks Heather used the Tibetan singing bowls to help relax her and address her pain. The woman really loved the singing bowls and would take the vibrations to her tumour where she felt they took the pain away. Her husband bought her a set of bowls and she learnt to play them. When she died the bowls were placed on her coffin and her 15 year old daughter inherited them. Heather then taught her daughter how to play them. The family said that this was a very supportive, nurturing and positive focus for Barbara and the family to help them cope with her death and the grief and loss experienced afterwards. It provided a way in which Barbara could feel in control and empowered at a time when she was most vulnerable.

The story of Arts in Health at FMC began in 1996, with a very modest health promotion program and now Arts in Health at FMC has become a permanent department of the Division of Allied Health, a mark of its growing recognition as an integral part of the model of care at Flinders Medical Centre.

The second story is located at the Kids Rehab Unit at the Children's Hospital at Westmead, where Dr Angie Morrow administers painful treatments to young patients with severe illnesses. Frequently the same kids need to return for injections and other procedures. As if the pain itself isn't enough, often they suffer high levels of anxiety caused by the treatments despite being given drugs.

Keen to alleviate this suffering, Dr Morrow dug into research records to see if there was any way of easing the situation without drugs. Her answer came unexpectedly at an arts-science speed dating event at the Powerhouse Museum in Sydney where she met artist George Khut. Armed with his laptop he showed Dr Morrow examples of his colourful, heart rate controlled interactive artworks. This chance meeting between a physician and an artist has led to an innovative research project called *BrightHearts*, at the Children's hospital at Westmead where early tests have demonstrated that it can help children to voluntarily lower their heart rates through intentional relaxation.

Bright hearts is an app-based relaxation training system for managing pain and anxiety experienced when undergoing recurrent clinical procedures. It monitors a patient's pulse, wirelessly feeding their heart rate to an iPad which is held by the patient or their carer. Dr Khuts' unique interactive art shows patients an abstract visualisation of their own heart rhythm and invites them to explore how they can alter these patterns. As the patient relaxes and slows their breathing the app responds by animating colourful, abstract imagery. After a small amount of training, children can learn to control the appearance of the work using their breath and relaxation.

Bright hearts and the Sound for relaxation program are examples of the many innovative interactions between the health sectors and artists occurring around Australia at hospitals, medical centres, research institutes and in public spaces that are designed to address a broad range of health and well-being issues.

For over thirty years, many thousands of Australian arts practitioners, clinicians and support workers in the health sector have understood that unlocking the creativity within people provides tremendous power to improve individual and community health and wellbeing.

We need to strengthen the capacity of the arts to contribute to the health and wellbeing of our society and for the first time in Australia arts workers and health workers have this opportunity.

A national framework on arts and health has been called for by the Australian Standing Council on Health. This is a powerful body of Federal and State Ministers charged with pursuing priority issues of national significance that require a sustained, collaborative effort and to address key areas of responsibility and funding.

For a relatively modest investment in arts and health programs, government funding for health can be driven further to a degree well out of proportion to the small amounts spent on arts and health. These modest investments have been, and can continue to be, used to tackle some of Australia's more intractable health issues including chronic disease, mental illness and reducing the gap in life expectancy and opportunities between Aboriginal Australians, Torres Strait Islander Australians and other Australians.

The evidence base for arts and health, the extent and quality of activity over 30 years and Australia's reputation for best practice in this area warrant Australian governments to make a formal commitment to policy and action in relation to arts and health in Australia.

This will provide a greater focus on this work, and thereby help to strengthen and sustain arts and health initiatives in Australia, resulting in a strengthening of individual and community health and wellbeing.

I was asked to focus on the economic contribution of the arts to our economy and in particular to health – that is what I have done – but it would be remiss of me to leave it there. This is only part of the story and I think best summed up in the words of Bobby Kennedy

Gross national product does not allow for the health of our children, the quality of their education, or the joy of their play. It does not include the beauty of our poetry... the intelligence of our public debate or the integrity of our public officials. It measures neither our wit nor our courage; neither our wisdom nor our learning; neither our compassion nor our devotion to our country.