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Film Inquiry Submission No. 69
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**Response to the inquiry into the future opportunities for Australia's film, animation special effects and electronics games industries.**

The JMC Academy is pleased to respond to the inquiry being made by the House of Representatives Standing Committee on Communications, Information, Technology and the Arts into the future of opportunities for Australia's film, animation, special effects and electronic games industries.

**JMC Academy Background**

The JMC Academy is a privately owned and operated college with campuses in Sydney and Melbourne. Each campus has a student body of approximately 400 students.

**Programs of study include:**

- Adv Dip Digital Animation
- Adv Dip Digital TV Production
- Adv Dip Audio Engineering
- Adv Dip Music Business Management
- Adv Dip Music Performance

In association with the University of New England.

- Bachelor of Communication Studies (Digital Animation)
- Bachelor of Communication Studies (Digital TV Production)
- Bachelor of Communication Studies (Audio Engineering)
- Bachelor of Arts (Music Business Management)
- Bachelor of Arts (Music Performance)

**Articulation arrangements:**

The JMC Academy has further articulation agreements with Sydney University and Macquarie University. Graduates from the JMC Academy

- Adv Dip Audio Engineering may articulate into the Master of Design Science (Audio) Sydney University
- Adv Dip Digital Animation may articulate into the Master of Design Science (Digital Media) Sydney University.
- Adv Dip Digital TV Production may articulate into Master of Design Science (Digital Video Production).
- Adv Dip Music Performance may articulate into Bachelor Arts (Music)



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### **Accreditation.**

The JMC Academy is a Registered Training Organisation and all programs are accredited by VETAB (Vocational Education and Training Accreditation Board).

1994: The JMC Academy was the first provider (public or private) to be accredited to deliver an audio engineering program.

1996: The JMC Academy was the first provider (public or private) to be accredited to deliver a multimedia program. This program has evolved into our current digital animation program.

2000 The JMC academy was the first provider (public or private) to be accredited to deliver a digital TV production program.

### **The JMC Academy Vision**

The entertainment technology industry is made up of five fundamental areas.

Sound, music, film/TV, animation/special effects and Management. By bringing these five areas together into one institution we are able to create, under one roof, what is effectively a microcosm of the industry. This provides an opportunity for a student studying in one area to work with those studying in another. I.e. a film or TV production developed by a student, would work with music students to provide a music score and audio students to record the dialogue and soundtrack, the animation and special effects students to provide the additional scenes and special effects and the management students to co-ordinate the production and provide the marketing expertise.

This type of synergy is indicative of the industry and by students working in this way they have already entered into, and made contact with those who will be the industry's future network of players.

### **Addressing the terms of reference**

#### *a) The current size and scale of Australia's film, animation, special effects and electronics games industries*

I would imagine that the committee is already aware of the size and scale of the industry, as the snapshot notes attached to the inquiry information paper provided some significant figures.

It was however interesting to note Bill Gates on the 60 minutes program broadcast on 29<sup>th</sup> June 2003.

Mr Gates suggested the games industry was larger than and expected to grow at a far greater rate than the film industry. The Microsoft organisation has invested considerable funds into the development of games hardware and software. The series on "Hollywood", broadcast on the ABC recently noted that in 2001, the animated movie "Shriek" was the number one movie of the year grossing some USD476 million.

In determining the significance of the size and scale of the industries in question. I would suggest that the committee take a more holistic approach and look for a combined value. I make this suggestion because in real terms to remove any one area from a production, could and most likely would reduce the impact of the final product.

In today's film production the use of special effects and of course soundtracks are par for the course and in many cases the production of a game attached to the marketing of the film is common place. Each industry should in my view be considered a sub-industry of the larger electronic media entertainment industry thus providing a true value to the Australian economy.

#### *e) The skills required to facilitate future growth in these industries and the capacity of the education and training system to meet these demands.*

The skills required to facilitate future growth are clearly, business, technical and creative skills.

There are a small number of institutions providing training and education in these fields. They include JMC Academy, AFTRS, Bond University, Griffith University, Charles Sturt University, University of Western Sydney and some TAFE campuses.

In most cases other than the JMC Academy and possibly AFTRS, the institution provides education in one specific area, most common being animation/CGI. This provides the graduate with a very niche skills set. This industry requires considerable collaboration between parties to produce a marketable product. The successful graduates are those who have a focus in their chosen area and a foundational understanding in the other areas that make up the total of the industry.

There are any numbers of brilliant animators, game designers or musicians, all working away diligently developing the "next big hit". None of these can go past the developer's front door if the developer does not have an understanding of the industry's basic business practises. The successful graduate needs the technical, creative and business skills. If any one of these are missing from the skill set success is less likely.

During the development of all five of the JMC Academy programs a number of industry panels were formed to advise on curriculum content. This was a VETAB requirement as part of the accreditation process. In all cases, in regards to potential employment, the curriculum advisory committee was very clear that graduates should have a broader understanding of all facets of the industry as well as an ability in their chosen field.

There are a number of production houses operating in Australia providing employment, in the areas of Animation, Film/TV production and Games design. The future for growth will be self-employment, contracting if you will, and the one-person developer who will market his or her product to a distributor. This is not dissimilar to what has occurred in the IT industry where many programmers now contract their time to larger developers or produce software that is then marketed through a distributor. The same has in fact occurred in the music industry where many creators of music for film scores, jingles or songs are self employed and market their products to advertising agencies or music publishers who in turn will find an artist looking for songs, or will be contracted to write for a specific purpose. Our guiding philosophy at JMC Academy is, it's not where you work or whom you work for that counts. It's what you do through your chosen field, to generate an income...

The capacity of the education and Training system to meet demands is severely hampered by the education system itself.

In post-compulsory education there are two sectors, each with it's own accreditation process.

They are: a) Higher Ed, b) Vocational Ed.

By its academic nature HE is focused on the academic pursuits of theory based knowledge, creative and critical thinking and provides a lessor focus on practical hands on delivery. On the other hand Voc Ed places a greater emphasis on the hands on, how to, technical approach with a lessor focus on the critical, creative thinking. The final result of these two independent approaches to education leave us in a difficult situation as the broader industry in question clearly needs graduates who are competent in the use of technical equipment and software and have an ability to create and conceive of ideas.

The accreditation process administered by VETAB in NSW and the equivalent in the other states also limits the ability for a private provider of education to cross the boundaries of the two sectors. In simple terms and by way of example, if a private provider were to apply for accreditation of Bachelor Degree, the accreditation system requires that a panel of experts and academics be convened for the purpose of assessing the program. This would seem a logical approach but for the fact that academics have a tendency to drag the program into line with other degrees and insist on a greater emphasis on the theory based knowledge, with a lessor focus on the technical.

One might argue that Universities being self-accrediting might get around this problem, but generally Universities are in the mind set of providing theory based education so there is a tendency to be self replicating.

Voc Ed accreditation too has suffered a significant blow in regard to the creative industries, through the implementation of "Training Packages".

Training Packages are collections of accredited crown copy write units endorsed by ANTA and administered by each national ITAB. An RTO (Registered Training Organisation) would use the training package as designed by the ITAB and supplement additional accredited units of it's own. Effectively the core subjects have been predetermined by the ITAB. The RTO supplementing the Training Package with it's own accredited units is only able to have those supplementary units accredited if there is no Training Package units that sound vaguely similar to those that the RTO would wish to add. The Training Package system is an efficient and effective approach providing the standardisation required in those industries focused on the "mechanical" or "factory floor" but severely hampers the creative industries.

would also suggest that it be impossible for Training Packages to keep up to date with the demands of the industry, as the industry changes at a greater rate than the Training Packages can be amended. It should be noted that as of January 2003 it has been no longer possible to seek the accreditation of a course where a training package that looks vaguely similar exist.

Regardless, the requirements of Voc Ed accreditation for courses or training packages is based on competency based training. The focus is clearly hands on and practical with a lessor focus on the critical and creative thinking. This is of course the opposite of HE.

At JMC Academy we have addressed these educational issues by merging 2years of Voc Ed subjects developed by JMC and one year of HE subjects developed by University of New England. To date this has produced positive results.

At the end of our accreditation for our current courses, JMC will a) have to use training packages or b) seek higher Ed accreditation. The pro's and con's I have discussed above.

*g) How Australia's capabilities in these industries, including in education and training, can best be leveraged to maximise export and investment opportunities.*

Education export has been a major contributor to Australia's economy and is expected to experience significant growth in the future.

Education in the creative industries must be allowed to keep up to date to meet the market demands. Flexibility in the accreditation of courses in the creative industries will allow this. The alternative will be that a significant education export market will be lost to the US, UK and Canada.

Martin Cass  
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JMC Academy