

The Government's Role in Supporting Creative Innovation

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I received a phone call about an hour ago to say that Minister McGrady had an urgent family matter to attend to and asked if I could stand in his stead today, and this, I quite welcome. I did not welcome the circumstances in which I was asked to do this, but I was going to come to the Conference anyway.

I would be remiss in not recognising Professor Lawrence Lessig. Welcome to Queensland. I have met you before via the video-conferencing screen. I would also like to recognise Deputy Vice-Chancellor Tom Cochrane and Professor Brian Fitzgerald and congratulate you on organising this Conference. It is very timely for what is happening here in Queensland and very apt that the Conference is here in Queensland, so congratulations on organising it.

The comments I wanted to make refer back to the launch of Creative Commons in Australia in April 2004, with Professor Lessig via the video conferencing screen at Queensland University of Technology (QUT). I came down in no official role, just out of interest because it sounded interesting. But I was like a blank page, knew nothing about the project itself. I walked into that room and my knowledge grew as the project was launched. After a very short amount of time, I was on the edge of my seat and the neurons were firing and doing brain gymnastics because in a role as a legislator or a parliamentarian it is very rare that you get, or you are presented with a new way of thinking. And that is how I felt that day. And the words of Professor Lessig's address here this morning were remarkable, stimulating, exciting. To complete the picture for you, two officers from the Office of Spatial Information who went to the launch introduced themselves to me and we were like a babbling brook walking down George Street, talking of what the Creative Commons Project was all about and how it did turn your thinking on its head.

As a legislator I call it, or have dubbed it, the Speed Bump Rule. We all live basically by the Speed Bump Rule — whoever was that first person that drove at a very fast speed through a car park has imposed upon the rest of us for the rest of life speed bumps. We have a very pessimistic view of

people and human nature and when we are dealing with issues at a legislative level, it is at a level where you try to imagine the most evil and dastardly deed a human could do. Then in our tool box we only have one tool, the big stick. And this is why I noticed the speakers spoke with optimism and I found that after the Creative Commons launch, being the eternal optimist that I am and a great believer in the best of human nature, it did turn my thinking around as a legislator.

But now I will turn to the Minister's speech. Just one last word before I do. I know that here in Queensland this will broaden the audience that will be talking in the terms and the premise of the Creative Commons Project. The title of the Minister's speech today is *The Government's Role in Supporting Creative Innovation*. Now the speech is not about what should the government do; what we will speak about is what is happening here and now, right here in Queensland. In my sort of moment of jest I call it the Queensland Boast, but of course it is much more than that and I just want to set the scene for you.

In 1998 when the Beattie Labor Government was elected to parliament and to government here in Queensland, we came in on a policy called 'The Smart State Strategy'. The thinking behind that strategy was that Queensland has always been a mine and a farm, and in our mining and farming the technologies that were being used were still, in many quarters, a hundred or more years old. And whilst we could rely on our economic base, based on the world prices of what was mined and what was farmed, we knew that that was not sustainable. In contrast the Smart State Strategy looked at ways of investing in emerging industries, investing in new technologies to bolster our traditional industries and to ensure that we have sustainable jobs for the future and a healthy economy here in Queensland.

In the early days of the Smart State Strategy it was changing the way of thinking here in Queensland; it was turning people, turning industry, on its ear and saying, "You can do better; you can embrace new technology; you can embrace new thinking". We put our money where our mouth was, investing in science and technology and innovation, and making innovation an essential plank to that strategy, and to the quality of life and the future of the Queensland community. To get the message across, the Premier decided that our number plates should read: 'Queensland. The Smart State'. Well, our daily newspaper, of august record, decided that we were, 'The Sunshine State', and we were going to remain 'The Sunshine State', and started a very negative campaign. But it is interesting what happens out there in the community, despite this overwhelming negative campaign

about being a smart state and having a smart state strategy. It still remained and could be built upon in the community. It did not get scuttled in other words. Nearly seven years, on, it is now becoming a much more widespread notion and something that all Queenslanders are very proud of. Even when you go into primary schools you get little seven and eight-year olds going, “we’re Queenslanders, we’re from the Smart State”, and you know the message has got through then.

We are up to the stage now where last year a paper went out for full consultation in relation to ‘The Smart State – Where to From Here?’ I understand quite a lot of submissions were made and they are being considered at the moment. I have no doubt that the premise of the Creative Commons Project was embodied in a submission and is probably at this moment being considered. It is not part of government policy at the moment. But what I just wanted to give you was some examples on that broader basis of innovation and supporting the creative industries here in Queensland, along with science and technology, and just to give you the colour and the feel of what practical things the government is doing.

One of the interesting debates and one of the areas where there is still a lot of work being done is how to commercialise the innovation that is happening. We are now becoming world known in relation to our mining software and product which is being developed here and now. Another area where Queensland is forging ahead is electronic games development. Our local companies, Krone and Auran, are leading the way for the games industry in Australia. Their products are sold internationally, particularly in the United States and Europe, and have expanded to Asia.

The other area where Queensland is leading the way is in relation to the e-health Network. You may have seen in the news about the medical teams over in Indonesia that are now using the e-health technology to assist the tsunami victims. And this e-health technology is recognised internationally as the largest and most utilised video conferencing network of any single health network in the world. And in e-security we have the largest research community in the southern hemisphere. QUT has had a lot to do with that coming to fruition. Indeed, in the very near future this will be boosted further with the opening of a dedicated e-Security Research Centre at the proposed Boggo Road Development. It was our old prison, so instead of securing people, we are now securing information there. This is a very exciting project here for Queensland and for Australia indeed.

Our bio-technology industry is also growing rapidly, receiving world-wide attention. We recently had the Australian Oz Bio Tech Conference here in Brisbane. It was the first time it was in Brisbane and there were 1300 delegates, the biggest ever, and can I say it was a very exciting conference. The other area where we are forging ahead is in relation to therapeutic drugs and other products. Queensland is recognised as having some of the most unique plant, marine and animal life in the world and again leading the way forward, and this time in legislation. The Queensland Parliament enacted the *Bio Discovery Act* last year. A lot of the marine and animal and plant life will come from the national parks and state lands here in Queensland. Under that Act, for the first time in the world, the State will benefit financially from the commercialisation of the use of that product into therapeutic drugs and goods. You were talking about traditional knowledge before. Whilst it does not cover the IP area, traditional knowledge is recognised under that Act. A requirement is that those pharmaceutical companies, or the bio-prospectors, have to reach agreement with the traditional owners of that traditional knowledge if they are to use that knowledge in the production of drugs and other goods. And that is the first time that this has been recognised in legislation as well.

The other area that we are putting a lot of effort into is the business side of the innovation and technologies. We have been a strong supporter of innovation because we understand that it creates the opportunities. We have helped by hosting conferences, like Oz Bio-Tech, assisting companies that take part in trade delegations through direct grants to help companies develop and commercialise technology, by assisting industry to set up clusters in areas where we have potential to create niche markets, and we have invested 2.4 billion dollars in science research and innovation in the past six years or so.

What we are also doing in relation to creative industries is investing. Here in Queensland we have a creative industries strategy and we have provided \$15M towards QUT's impressive \$60M Creative Industries Precinct at Kelvin Grove. We have also developed in conjunction with industry a \$4.4M creative industries strategy, as I have said, which focus on the business end of the creative process. We realise that creative industries have enormous potential to create more jobs and wealth for Queensland and we are also working to enhance and spread our Smart State reputation globally.

I hope you take that away back to your home after today because I know that as I go around the country we are the envy of all other states, through

the recognition, the strategies and the dollars, the investment. We have also found that the creative industries have already contributed 1 billion dollars to the value of Queensland's goods and services each year and that there are 65,000 Queenslanders employed directly or indirectly in creative industries. It is no small employer for the State. That probably measures up with the manufacturing industry which employs somewhere just up to about 180-190,000 people, just to give you some idea.

The only other thing I wanted to mention to you today is that last year we supported a successful writers' foray into Los Angeles, which showcased the work of 14 Queensland writers to film development executives and top-named agents. And we are very proud of the fact that that has already had a great success with our local author Nick Earl picking up a deal to option his novel, *48 Shades of Brown*,³⁶ for film development, and we understand that there will be some further good news to follow there. That was a government initiative to take the writers into Los Angeles.

If the Minister was here today, the message that he would want to get across to you, and the message that I want to give on behalf of the Queensland Government, is that we are committed to helping our creative people sell their products and we are committed to the creative industries here in Queensland. I wish you all the best for the remainder of the Conference and look forward to meeting a few of you over lunch.

³⁶ (1999) Penguin Books, Victoria.