Creativity & Cultural Production in the Hunter

An applied ethnographic study of new entrepreneurial systems in the creative industries.

Final Report: Hunter Creative Industries

Advertising and Design

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9. ADVERTISING AND DESIGN

9.1 Introduction
Advertising and Marketing represents a very significant creative industries sector in the Hunter Region. It includes the work of advertising agencies, that of design agencies and the increasing variety of work PR agencies undertake in marketing and strategic communication. As well as the people who work in-house, these agencies are all crucial employers of various freelance video makers and their crews, photographers and graphics designers as well as jingle writers and web designers. Many of these freelancers work in collaborative workspaces and the level of their education and training is quite high for such a young creative industries sector.

9.2 A Brief History of Advertising and Design in Australia
Advertising and marketing, as John Sinclair writes, ‘historically is the force that sustains all commercial media’ (in Cunningham & Turnbull 2014, p. 209). It has been in existence for some time. Until the end of the nineteenth century, household goods were usually delivered or bought in bulk but soon after ‘the production of packaged and branded household goods became widespread in all industrialised countries’ (ibid, p. 211). Many of the best-known brands in Australia such as Rosella, Arnotts and Fosters were established at this time. There had been advertising of these brands and many others in newspapers for some time, which is why commercial artists were important during this period (Young 2015, pp. 219-34), but ‘from this time on, however, manufacturers in industrial capitalist societies built up national sales organisations, using advertising in conjunction with other marketing strategies in packaging and distribution’ (ibid, pp. 211-12).

The development of the golden age of radio in the thirties in Australia was important as the big advertising companies such as George Patterson Pty Ltd who handled the large soap companies like Colgate Palmolive and the Lever Brothers, began to exert a tremendous influence on programming through their purchase of large amounts of air time. Shows they supported included Dad and Dave, the Lux Radio Hour, Australia’s Amateur Hour, The Quiz Kids and of course Pick-A-Box. Performers like Jack Davey and Bob Dyer were used to promote the sponsor’s products whether it was biscuits, toothpaste or cars (Baird 1992, p. 8). ‘The production of such programmes in conjunction with the revenue derived from traditional forms of advertising served to strengthen the advertising industry and reinforce the media's dependence on it’ (Crawford 2008, online). In this way, advertising became critical to the way radio developed. The arrival of television as the prime mass medium after the Second World War reinforced this trend. As Sinclair asserts:

The international manufacturing-marketing-media complex we know today did not really emerge until after World War II, as US corporations seized opportunities to invest overseas in industrial development and to exploit the relative affluence that accompanied it. Among these corporations were the new US television networks and the advertising agencies of Madison Avenue (in Cunningham & Turnbull 2014, pp. 212).

While Australian agencies took on the gendered characteristics of Madison Avenue, women were not entirely locked out of the advertising world, as Jackie Dickinson reveals in her book Australian Women in Advertising in the Twentieth Century (2016). Dickinson presents evidence which suggests that ‘from the end of the nineteenth century, increasing numbers of educated, middle class Australian women sought paid work. Advertising provided an acceptable route for many of these women to enter the workforce’ (2016, p. 11). Advertising and marketing, not
surprisingly, began ‘to become established as an integral part of the new age of corporate capitalism’ (ibid). Public relations, as an entity devoted to marketing those corporations, and other entities, also comes into existence at this point.

As Sheehan (2014, pp. 20-46) and Zawawi (2009, pp. 26-46) variously argue, PR’s history in Australia is complex. Knights suggest that ‘strategic planning in PR has developed out of the advertising industry. As a form of communication, advertising has been operating at a sophisticated level for more than a century’ (Knights 2001, p. 5). PR’s recent history, as Knight further explains, can be traced to the 1960s ‘when advertising had become a multi-million dollar global industry’ (2001, p. 5) and public relations established for itself a place in relation to this industry. This relationship is important to understand since:

Although it was much younger, and had smaller budgets to play with and was perhaps a little harder to define, it was growing at a fast rate and, at least on the agency side, it tended to model itself on its older advertising sister, with, for example, ‘account directors’ and ‘account reviews’ and ‘pitches’ for new business. It was therefore probably inevitable that by the 1990s PR agencies would start to follow ad agencies [in the way they operated] (Knights 2001, p. 5).

Not only was PR important to the marketing and advertising arena at all levels but the advertising world increasingly incorporated the design world into its orbit as well.

While Alan Young’s article in the *Journal of Design History*, entitled ‘Commercial Art to Graphic Design: The Rise and Decline of Commercial Art in Australia’ (2015), indicates the symbiotic relationship design has long had with the advertising world, the history of design in Australia can be traced back to the 1880s, according to Michael Bogle's book *Design in Australia: 1880-1970* (1998). Tony Fry's influential *Design History Australia* (1988) also gives an overview of the increasing influence of design in both the world it operates in but also in increasingly drawing in a broad array of professions into that sphere. There has been an expansionary and at times all-encompassing approach to what constitutes the realm of design1. For example, on the Design Institute of Australia’s website there is a link to a *History of Design in Australia: 1789–2002* which starts with a Wedgwood medallion being fired from Botany Bay clay in 1789 and in 1820 ‘Webster and Temple, two convicts, make a set of chairs for Governor Macquarie’ (DIA 2017, online). In the twenty first century, design has become an integral element of product development. The reason for this is two-fold. First, appreciation has grown of the value of aesthetics to the saleability of consumer goods (Apple being an example). In addition, there is a growing understanding that functionality can be enhanced when product design is given priority (Naiman 2017, online).

The Design Institute of Australia (DIA), which began as the Society of Designers for Industry in 1947, has members from ‘a broad gamut of disciplines in both established and emerging fields of design. They include (but are not limited to) spatial designers, communications designers, industrial designers, design educators, systems designers and design managers’ (DIA 2017, online). There are those working in digital media, exhibition and display, systems and service design, industrial, jewellery, fashion, textile, furniture, interior, architecture and set design and many other forms recognised by the DIA. Some of these forms of design have been instrumental in the more recent popularity of ‘bespoke’, hand crafted products where many consumers have tired of the uniformity and short life-span of many mass-produced goods. However, it is graphic design that has most often been associated with advertising. The

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1 As an example see Michael Smythe's *New Zealand by Design: A History of New Zealand Product Design* (2011). A review of this book contends that 'Smythe begins by provocatively re-inscribing 'Maori art' as 'Maori design' (though neither term was relevant in pre-colonial New Zealand)' (Hochscher 2014, p. 188).
Australian Graphic Design Association was founded in 1988 and is now ‘a lead member of the International Council of Graphic Design Organisations, forming a global network of 187 member associations in 56 countries and consultative status with UNESCO, UNIDO, ISO and WIPO’ (AGDA 2017, online).

9.3 Structure of Advertising and Design Industry

Agencies in this sector have been split into two basic categories. Advertising agencies include full-service, boutique, digital, in-house or media specialist agencies while promotion agencies include direct marketing, sales promotion, event planning, public relations and design agencies (Mills 2017, online) many of which have been combined into what are called full-service agencies:

Full-service agencies provide clients with all the services they need for the entire advertising function. This includes planning, creating, producing, and placing the ads, as well as research before the campaign and evaluation after it to assess the campaign’s effectiveness. Full-service agencies have expanded in recent years through consolidation—larger agencies buy them when they want to provide a one-stop shop for their global clients. In the process, the types of services that agencies provide has expanded to include PR, design, and event planning (Saylor 2017, online).

Some agencies focus on one aspect of the creative process such as creative production work or media buying. They refer to themselves as ‘specialised agencies’ (Saylor 2017, online). For example, some companies will specialise in media planning and buying. Some interactive agencies, gaming agencies and search agencies may partner with other agencies ‘to provide services for the full campaign as determined by the client or the lead agency’ (ibid). However, some companies prefer to retain control over advertising and ‘may set up in-house agencies within the corporation. An advertising director typically runs the in-house agency; she chooses which services to buy and which to perform internally’ (ibid).

This in-house agency may keep ‘creative services in house, create advertisements itself, and then purchase media-buying services from the outside. The inside agency may buy services from a specialised service agency or buy services à la carte from a full-service agency’ (ibid). In-house agencies are generally cost-effective and ‘give the company greater control over the entire process. In addition, internal employees may have a deeper understanding of the company and its customers than would an outside agency. Insiders can also coordinate the promotion better with the firm’s overall marketing program and other functions, such as ensuring that enough products are made and delivered in advance of a promotion.

In addition to the types of agencies, there is also the role that the agency plays in the client’s business. The most common and secure relationship is the agency of record, or lead agency. As clients may work with many different agencies for their various needs, the agency of record is the lead agency partner and usually has the majority of the client’s business (Saylor 2017, online).
In the advertising and design world, revenue may be generated from a number of sources. For example, commissions may be earned dependent on the media form targeted. A commission of 15% is usually charged for what is displayed on broadcast media. This fee is similar for outdoor media such as signage. Commissions on digital media are often negotiable. There will also be mark-up charges placed against production costs and any fixed costs such as wages are calculated here as well. Work may be outsourced, for example, to specialist design houses or video companies, and the contracts drawn up to govern the arrangement will specify objectives.
along with the negotiated fee. Nearly all projects are calculated on an hourly rate or else a fixed price will be agreed to be paid on completion of the project. A typical revenue stream flows in the following way: the media bills the agency for the cost of a spot, and the agency then bills the client. This bill includes the cost of the spot, plus the commission which covers production costs, agency’s copywriting, art direction, and account service charges. The percentage of profit necessary for the agency to stay afloat is added on here.

9.5 Operational Methods
Traditionally an advertising or design agency will work to a brief. This will generally include information on the product or service required, the competition, the proposed target market, what consumer need or problem is being addressed, what the consumer thinks of the brand, the one thing they need to believe about this product, what can be done to make them believe this, and some idea of the tone of the communication to be used. Much of this information may be garnered through what is now called the design thinking process. Traditionally, design has most often occurred late in the production process, when the need has been to promote or package finished goods or services for sale, for example through advertising. However, in order to both facilitate the brief and/or aid in product development, design thinking has been developed and applied in many situations in the workplace. The five stages of design thinking were originally proposed by the Hasso-Plattner Institute of Design at Stanford, known informally as d.school. These stages include empathising with the user, defining the problem, ideating or generating ideas, prototyping and testing. Design thinking is increasingly seen as a useful strategy where innovation is being called for, but once the brief is agreed on the agency will operationalise that brief by bringing into being a novel campaign, product or service.

9.6 Important Personnel
An advertising agency may employ a creative director, account executive, copywriter, media buyer and traffic controller as well as a graphic designer, PR specialist, brand manager, social strategist, developer, UX designer and any number of freelancers. Design agencies may employ graphic designers, for example, to fulfil work contracted from advertising agencies but many also employ film makers, web designers, photographers, illustrators, interior designers, filmmakers, set decorators and stylists. Many of these operatives, if they are not employed directly, will work on contract or freelance themselves. Often designers, and of course many others, may be employed as embedded creatives, for example in the public relations area of a government department or the social media unit of a large corporation.

Inside advertising agencies there are certain staff functions that will not, typically, be outsourced. These include Account Managers who work closely with clients to ensure the brand is served well, to identify and ensure a focus on the target audience, to help position the client competitively and to develop the most appropriate complete promotion plan. In terms of market research, account planners work with clients ‘to obtain or conduct research that will help clients understand their markets and audiences’ (Saylor 2017, online). Art Directors or Copywriters engage with clients ‘to develop the concepts and messages that will catch consumers’ interest and attention’ (ibid). The creative department will generate the ideas, images and words of the message being enacted. The agency will also typically employ a media buyer to ‘evaluate the multitude of options available for ad placement—now greatly expanded by the Internet. They decide how best to allocate the client’s budget to use the best media to most effectively reach the target audience’ (ibid).
A number of other specialised companies service the advertising world. These include art studios and various design firms who may be involved in such things as designing ‘logos, stationery, business cards, and packaging design for products’. Film and video companies may be contracted to produce vision and sound for all screen-based media, photographers are in demand for stills that are to be used in print, pamphlets and/or on web-based platforms, while web designers or specialised media strategists may be contracted for their experience with internet-based media. Printing firms are still contracted ‘to produce printed material for a variety of media channels’ (ibid). Promotion agencies may also work within specialised sectors such as the music industry, while other public relations agencies will assist in marketing strategies, event planning and overall strategic communication. Various research companies have sprung up to service the advertising and design sector.

9.7 The Hunter Region Advertising and Design Sector

9.7.1 Introduction

‘The advertising industry is complex, and many different types of skills are required to create a successful ad campaign. Career possibilities abound for people who are artistic, good at writing, analytical and creative’ (Saylor 2017, online). There are, as seen from directly above, a wide variety of employment possibilities within the advertising and design sector and most are well represented in the Hunter. Many of these people develop their skills through a program of study, for example at University or TAFE or at a private college. Some, however, are self-taught or learn ‘on the job’. Digital skills are fundamentally important for many working in this sector but traditional hand skills continue to be important, especially with the current vogue for bespoke/craft styling. Advertising and design agencies offer services across the range of ‘real world’ and digital economy applications and while they are physically located in the Hunter Region, a number work nationally. Design agencies and PR companies are linked to them.

9.7.2 Advertising Agencies

A number of very successful creative individuals from across the country began their careers in advertising agencies. Philip Adams, a film maker, author, radio presenter, public intellectual and long-term resident of the Upper Hunter, began his creative career in this sector of the creative industries. He found himself:

In the company of people like Bruce Petty, Fred Schepisi who would go on to become a significant film maker, Peter Carey, et al. There were a lot of us. We didn’t know each other necessarily at the time, nor had we confessed our creative ambitions to each other, but advertising gave us a home long before the government got interested in setting up funding bodies. So that’s how I started (Adams i/v April 2016).

As well as this familiar story from the Upper Hunter, the unique demographic profile of Newcastle has traditionally been important to the advertising sector of the city. Peter de Jong, a former musician and songwriter who recorded with Alberts Music, was a Creative Director with Peach Advertising, a large Newcastle-based company which handled national accounts for companies such as Telstra, Coca Cola and Australia Post. De Jong explains:

If companies have a new product to launch they’ll test it in one of two places in Australia. Those places are Newcastle and Adelaide. Newcastle, and Adelaide as well, is seen as a good test market and product release point by the advertising, manufacturing and service industries and if you watch your television on a Sunday
evening, especially when the movie is on, you’ll see, as an example, new ads for Telstra and other leading companies like them. Telstra’s new Postshop brand kicked off here in Newcastle before it was released across the country and the reason major companies do this is that Newcastle has a broad demographic make-up of socioeconomic factors that represents Australia generally. It is a microcosm that contains good cross sections of all areas that make up the general population of the country. This makes it ideal as a test market to launch new products (De Jong in Supersonic 2003, p. 17).

Peach Advertising, the company which de Jong worked for, ran many successful campaigns. As part of the STW group, it was one of Newcastle’s longer-established advertising agencies, providing work for a diverse set of ‘creatives’. It was, therefore a target for takeover, and recently merged with its major competitor in the city, Enigma. In 2011 Enigma’s Founder, CEO and Managing Director, Lisa Sutton Gardner, stated:

For the last two decades Enigma and Peach have spearheaded Newcastle’s ability to compete with Sydney and Melbourne in the advertising, marketing and communication sectors. We’re now harnessing that energy in a combined entity that will enhance our ability to compete with multinational companies around Australia (Campaign Brief, 2011).

This merger helped create the largest agencies in Newcastle and allows Enigma ‘to expand its capabilities in digital media and government social marketing’ (Campaign Brief, 2011).

Clients of these firms have included Roy Morgan Research, the NSW Minerals Council, Klosters Motors, Countrylink, the RSPCA and Charles Sturt University. Enigma now positions itself as delivering branding, strategy, media, PR, digital, design and production services for its clients. The company’s projects provide a set of platforms for the ‘creatives’ involved. For example, after working closely with McDonald Jones Homes, the firm undertook extensive film and photography shoots to create an advertising campaign that ran in the Sydney metropolitan area as well as the south and north coast markets in NSW. These ‘creatives’ include a number of professionals who have worked across a number of sectors within the creative industries. A few of them are former musicians, such as those whom de Jong mentioned above, but they also include Matt Plummer and Brian Daly.

Matt Plummer worked as a musician for ten years with Supersonic (see Section 6.7.7) before moving to the United Kingdom where he took up design work in London and Leeds. There he ‘created art for brands like 3 Mobile, And1, You Are Here Records and Royal Parks’ (Plummer 2017, online). He eventually returned to Newcastle and secured a position as Art Director with Enigma with clients such as the NSW Government, CountryLink and Volkswagen. His client list soon expanded to include NIB, RED Energy, Mojo Homes, and the McDonald Jones Group (ibid). Brian Daly, on the other hand, describes himself as a composer, director, writer, creative director and musician who works across a number of agencies such as Enigma, Kent Woodcock, Sticky and Eluminate, making ads, videos and jingles for clients (Daly 2017, online).

A number of these ‘creatives’ involved in the type of work Plummer and Daly do, move between firms. Out of the Square Media (OOTS), for example, benefits from the expertise of a number of former Peach and Enigma employees. Jamie Lewis (also see film sector) is a case in point.

Lewis is a graduate of the University of Newcastle’s Bachelor of Arts (Communication Studies) program. During his studies he was a member of Footlice Theatre Company, and he began work at the Media Communications Unit in Newcastle. In 1996 he started in advertising in a junior role as a copywriter/production assistant with a local company where he learned the process of
producing tightly scripted and shot commercials from idea to execution. After spending nine years with Enigma, in 2012 Lewis moved to OOTS, as his Linked In site declares (Lewis 2017, online). He is OOTS’ Creative Director.

In Newcastle, we often have many hats and I do a lot of copywriting and I direct commercials, corporate videos and different forms of content as well as presenting to clients. That is kind of my role in a nutshell as a creative director, but as a creative practitioner I just call myself a writer and director and I just love creating, fantasy stories in terms of anything that has a twist on reality I love, so I take something that is quite normal and like to put a spin on it in some way (Lewis i/v May 2015).

Lewis has treated his time in the advertising world as a learning experience, especially in regard to collaboration:

I was a terrible one at this, I had always thought it's my idea, I have to make it and the collaborative, to me, was quite wrong in that it was really just having people to help fulfil your vision. Which isn't collaboration it's ... ‘I've got this bloody big idea and you will do this, this and this’. Then, working with Ian Hamilton (Limelight Creative Media) was the first time that I have probably met someone where collaboration was very intense but I saw the benefit of that, in a much better way. And I think too in the earlier advertising days where I worked, a lot of it was people defending their ideas rather than people working collaboratively (Lewis i/v May 2015).

OOTS was founded by Martin Adnum, a former cameraperson from NBN Television and has grown from its television and video production background into a full-service agency (OOTS 2017, online). Adnum himself specialises in account management, concept development, creative direction, copywriting, social media and video and audio production (ibid). Adnum and his team at OOTS recently distinguished themselves with the Feel Inspired promotional campaign for Newcastle which was taken up by local television station NBN, a 9 Network affiliate. The OOTS website specifies that they offer media placement and buying services, audio and video production, copywriting, graphic design, photography, app development, web design, event management and brand strategy (ibid), indicating the merging of advertising, design and PR functions.

While firms such as John Church, StickyAds, The Village of Useful, MAD Media Group, Artbeat and Level 7 construct complex digital environments for their clients, the use of highly interactive social media is not overt in their own digital environments. In this case it appears that the ‘desire for intimacy’ with the public, as Weinman (2013) argues, is something that is deployed by advertising businesses in current marketing but it is not something that advertising agencies expect to do themselves as part of their own businesses. The larger agencies also employ key big data and other tools to enhance their client experience and aid in targeting certain audiences.

9.7.3 Design Agencies

As indicated above, the advertising and design sectors of the creative industries in the Hunter often overlap, feeding off and informing each other. In addition, the digital environment has become increasingly important in the range of services these sectors offer. The design sector itself now offers clients a variety of services which include, amongst many others, web design, social media design, search engine optimisation (SEO) and associated techniques. Competition, while always fierce, has increased. For example, the recent entry of Fairfax Marketing into the
local business mix offers business clients an integrated and sophisticated model of support, measurement and feedback on their use of social media within the engagement and marketing mix. The Fairfax presence appears to be influencing small business to enter the digital marketing world in a new way. Agencies such as Graphika, Redback Solutions, Nodding Dog Design, Suckerpunch Design and Glue Digital have taken these ideas on board and like their advertising agency cousins, outsource many services locally and, at times, internationally.

An example of these agencies is Headjam which does much of the same but has eschewed the nomenclature of ‘design’ and instead describes itself as a ‘creative agency.’ They offer services and expertise in advertising campaigns, advertising photography, branding, graphic design, marketing, print media, project management, video production and what they describe as web+digital. For Headjam:

Web and digital covers everything that happens via the internet, and the wide range of computer-based technology that we use in everyday life. Headjam has expertise in a wide range of web and digital based disciplines including website design and development, through to app creation for mobile phones and tablets. We have the ability to build a complete online business for you, and specialise in the latest in web design approaches: responsive design. Responsive web and digital solutions can be used across all types of devices, from mobile phones to tablets, laptops and desktop computers. Our web and digital skillset has been built up through experience in many contexts, creating small business websites through to massive online learning environments. Headjam have the ability to tackle the most complicated web and digital challenges for your organisation (Headjam 2017, online).

Headjam are digitally connected via sites such as Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, Google+, LinkedIn, Vimeo, YouTube, Pinterest and The Loop and they have a blog which they use for ‘spreading the word’. Principal, Managing Director and founder of the company, Luke Kellett, ‘graduated with Distinction from Account Management from the Communications Council’s own AdSchool’ (Headjam 2017, online).

He worked in London creating media for music labels Atlantic, Sony Music and Universal and his photography has attracted to Headjam a portfolio that includes Boy and Bear, Hiatus Kaiyote and The Waifs, and won him prizes at the Melbourne Design Awards and the Woodford Folk Festival. Thousands of his ethnographic photographs of the bohemian community in Melbourne were recently purchased to form part of the permanent collection of the Victorian State Library (Headjam 2017, online).

Kellett’s specialism includes producing ‘audiovisual content for broadcast and web-based contexts’ (ibid) and he is now responsible for ‘accounts from the first client meeting and oversees the execution of strategy for creative and branding across digital and traditional media platforms, and manages all IP for the agency’ (ibid). Sarah Cook is also a principal of the firm. After learning as much as she could in Melbourne and Sydney, she ‘came home to Newcastle in 2011 take the reins of Headjam’s design team’ (Headjam 2017, online). She has a Diploma of Graphic Design and a Certificate III in Fine Arts, both from Hunter TAFE. She is an advocate of the latest design methods and ‘her designs utilise the techniques of graphic design to permit form and function to meet in a sophisticated aesthetic response to the challenge at hand’ (ibid). Mike Preston is a principal of the firm as well. He is highly experienced, having spent at least thirty years in advertising:

Directing the launch of major brands such as Optus and Hahn in the Australian marketplace. Career highlights include two of Australia’s longest running
campaigns, one for Johnson & Johnson and the other for Colgate. He worked with a long list of renowned agencies including JWT, Publicis, McCann Erickson, FCB, George Patterson and Clemenger BBDO (Headjam 2017, online).

Preston has also collaborated with NSW Health, the Government Census, the RTA and EPA (ibid).

These principals work with a team of in-house staff which includes a studio manager, account managers, a senior designer, an art director, senior digital developers, and a designer and illustrator. Helen Simmons is their Broadcast Designer. She is a motion graphics expert who specialises in editing, 2D and 3D animation, motion tracking, compositing, and stop motion (ibid). She began her career in Melbourne after graduating from Victoria University:

Wanting to learn more from the university of life and with the world at her feet, she flew to London to begin her new adventure. Landing junior roles with Gorgeous Enterprises and Annex Films, Helen rapidly grew her skillset and she quickly fulfilled a lifelong ambition of owning her own production studio. Helen founded The Visual Collective, where she worked with brands both locally and internationally, providing video editing and animation services to clients such as King’s College London, Nescafe and Barclays Bank (Headjam 2017, online).

The team at Headjam depends on a variety of freelancers. These include photographers Alex McIntyre and James Geer, illustrator Keo Match, broadcast designer Josh Bruce, cinematographer Pete McMurray, account planner and researcher Dr Benjamin Matthews, and service designer Doug Helman, while public relations is handled by Meg Purser from Purser PR, Headjam’s ‘PR agency of choice’ (ibid).

9.7.4 Marketing and Public Relations Agencies

Dotted throughout the Hunter Valley are a number of working public relations professionals. Some work for agencies, some run their own agencies, some work within the corporate world or public service and some freelance within specific sectors of the creative industries. Purser Corporate Communication (PCC), for example, has been at work in public relations in the region since 1984. Meg Purser, a graduate of the Communication program at the University of Newcastle, is its Managing Director. PCC are, according to their website (PCC 2017, online), a traditional public relations agency which advises businesses on their communication strategy looking closely at their messaging, community engagement, corporate positioning and methods of handling issues and crises. As well as this higher level strategic work they also engage clients interested in their publication development and production management for reports, magazines, newsletters and brochures. On behalf of various clients, they undertake project and event management, and social media campaign content and positioning; they help write speeches, scripts and content for digital platforms; and they organise promotional materials and presentations. They also deal with media and public affairs, acting as consultants who ‘maintain contacts in regional, metropolitan and trade media’ (ibid). PCC also delivers media training offering assistance with editorial and advertorials, media liaison, opinion pieces, submissions and briefing papers as well as providing detailed situation analysis for their various clients. PCC includes in its team Melinda Smith, a former News Presenter and journalist at NBN Television. Smith also worked as a broadcaster on commercial and ABC radio networks before moving into corporate affairs and the management of strategic community welfare partnerships (PCC 2017, online).

Heidi Pollard, who grew up in Toronto, is also a graduate of the Communication program at the University of Newcastle. She holds a Masters in Professional Communication from the
University of Southern Queensland. Pollard is now the CEO of UQ Power but her first job was at the John Hunter Hospital as a Public Relations Manager.

My very first day I had a car accident on the way to work. So, I actually arrived via an ambulance to the Emergency Department. I had to ring my brand new boss and say, ‘I’m going to be a little bit late, and I’m going to be coming via Emergency’. Maybe it was first day nerves, but I actually remember saying about three months into the job that I’d learnt more in the three months than I felt I’d learnt in three years of the degree. And it wasn’t until I was probably in my career about three years [when] I was managing strategies and actually doing campaigns and I started going ‘Oh, now my university knowledge is coming to help me’. And I would go and get old textbooks and things out, and actually draw on it then. But in the first probably three to six months of my career, it was more just learning office politics – how to work with an executive, how to deal with the media when you get 15 calls within 10 minutes from different media outlets and you’re like, I wasn’t really prepared for this. I used to take a whole day to write a media release. And now I have to punch something in 10 seconds, and get it approved by an executive and minister, and get it out to the media (Pollard i/v May 2016).

The tasks she and her team were given were varied and at times hard to pinpoint.

I used to say all the time to my team that we had a sign above our door that said ‘dump your shit here’. Because in PR, it seems like anything that doesn’t fit in an organisation neatly, into Finance, Accounts, HR, they go ‘give it to the PR people, they will sort something out’. So, I learnt really quickly just how to be ambidextrous, and deal with lots of different things, from bikies turning up with guns strapped to their ankles that want to donate to children, to you know, media, to a policeman getting shot in the back and you know, helicopters landing and massive coverage. So you just kind of learnt to roll with it (Pollard i/v May 2016).

After accumulating a wide variety of experiences such as these, Pollard moved to Hunter TAFE where she became the Manager, Marketing Public Affairs. Next she moved to WorkCover NSW as the Director of Communications. It was her CEO at John Hunter Hospital who offered her wise counsel. Pollard found that her leadership skills developed because people above her supported her ideas:

I was really fortunate when I was at John Hunter in that first position that our executive, the CEO there was brilliant. A really good leader, and he taught me very early on what a good leader does. And he really supported and empowered me. So, even things like we had three fatalities that came about for people who had had open heart surgery, and I was still pretty new in the manager role. And we’d been doing a values program with staff about what’s important, and one of those things was honesty, and patient care. So, I felt the need that we should go public, and actually talk about we’ve got an issue we’re investigating. The surgeons wanted to keep it quiet and manage it in-house. So, I ran a press conference with Channel 9, Channel 7, Channel 10, The Australian [newspaper], all of those people where I’d never done anything like that in my life. But it actually ended up being in our favour, ‘cos they appreciated that we were on the front foot about it. So I was really lucky to have someone like him in the beginning. And I used to get quite overwhelmed because of the amount of detail and the volume that you deal with, in PR. And he used to always come in at night and just say ‘eat it like an elephant, one chunk at a time’ (Pollard i/v May 2016).
At the end of her WorkCover NSW job, Pollard took six months’ leave to change her career direction.

I went to the States and studied to be a business coach. So, went to Texas and did this course in a compressed way. It was a three-year course and I did it in six months. Because what I found more and more, it felt a bit like Groundhog Day in that in Comms, you can often see the same themes every year, and seasonal things, and I started going ‘I could do that with my eyes shut – what do I really love about what I do?’ And what I loved was developing people. And I found that I’d had staff that had worked for me at John Hunter who’d followed me to TAFE, who’d followed me to WorkCover. So, people would keep going ‘I want to work with you!’ So, I said ‘There’s something in that, you know?’ I actually love the human side of what we do, connecting people, developing. So, I did the coaching course, and then in my last year at WorkCover I negotiated to be able to work a four-day week. I actually worked compressed hours, so I worked five days in four. And then would have the fifth day off every week to actually start coaching. And so, I did that pro bono for a year - for free, just to kind of get my coaching hours up, and get practised at it. So, Leading Value is essentially a leadership kind of coaching company (Pollard i/v May 2016).

Leading Value is a company owned by Pollard that has given way to UQ Power. Pollard is also Director of First Firm, a property investment business, and she is Chair of the Professional Communicators Network, based in Newcastle, which she founded. She is Chief Leading Lady of the Leading Ladies International, a networking organisation that runs global programs for women. She was a member of the Hunter Medical Research Institute Foundation and is currently Chair of the Bachelor of Communication Advisory Board, at the University of Newcastle. In essence Pollard is now an entrepreneur and her talents include being an international company culture coach, a property investor, motivational speaker, philanthropist, humanist author and leadership advocate. Her principal position is currently Chief Empowerment Officer of UQ Power. This firm is aimed at future-proofing businesses, empowering people and leveraging business leadership. UQ Power runs a number of business services for business leaders, HR professionals and event planners. Pollard has learnt to value her time and delegate where necessary and uses a number of virtual services that help her stay on top of her commitments. One of these is a Virtual Assistant, Claire, who is paid $65 an hour to manage Heidi’s diary and help with highly technical tasks. Claire lives in Queensland and they have met only once in seven years:

But some of the stuff that she does for me would take me three hours, and takes her 10 minutes, you know. 'Cos like I said I’m not great at the detail. But I now also have a subscription to a service in the US called Fancy Hands. And it’s about $6-8 per task US, so still really cheap for us, and a task is sort of 20 minutes’ allotment. So, I’m going to Vegas next week for a conference that I’m speaking at, and so I wanted to check out what are the co-working spaces that are over there. So I just shoot a task on my Fancy Hands page, and say can someone do some research for me. And within 10 minutes, I get back an email with all the different services there are and companies, here’s their contact details, opening hours, all of that. 'Cos if I go onto the internet, I go down the rabbit hole and I won’t come out for three hours, you know. I am easily distracted by bright, shiny objects. So for me it’s all about controlling that (Pollard i/v May 2016).

Paula Jones, on the other hand, is a determined specialist. She has thirty years’ experience in the music industry and is now the Director of JonesPR. She runs her business out of her offices in Merewether. She began her career in retail ‘followed by six years in publicity/promotions
and marketing with various record companies’ (Jones 2017, online). Jones first worked in the music industry as NSW Print Media and Regional Promotions Coordinator for Polygram Records where she managed ‘publicity and promotions for all artists and label projects signed to the Phonogram label relating to key press, radio and TV within NSW as directed by the Promotions Manager’ (ibid). She took that experience and moved through the ranks of Polygram Records and on to Larrikin Entertainment before moving to Sony Music Entertainment where she was the Queensland Promotions Manager. She quickly moved to their subsidiary Murmur Music to become the National Promotions Manager. She secured Midnight Oil and Silverchair as major clients and set up JonesPR in 1998. This company undertakes ‘major publicity campaigns for clients with new release albums and tours within the Australian music industry’ (ibid). Her present list of clients includes Midnight Oil, Peter Garrett, Paul Kelly, John Butler Trio, Kate Miller-Heidke, Kim Churchill, Karnivool and the Heavenly Sounds tours (ibid). She was the head Event Publicist for the Homebake Festival for eleven years and did much the same for the Groovin The Moo Festivals across a six-year period. She has mentored others through her teaching in the Music Business course at Hunter TAFE, been a regular participant in panel discussions for the industry, and since 2001 has worked pro bono for Music NT as part of their Bush Bands Business project. ‘Held just outside of Alice Springs, it assists indigenous bands living in remote communities throughout the NT with 3 intensive days of workshops culminating in the Bush Bands Bash concert’ (ibid).

9.7.5 Freelancers and Designer Makers

Design is an increasingly wide and inclusive field. It encompasses graphic design, industrial design and architecture as well as fashion design in all its manifestations. In addition, consultancies for interior design, furniture design, illustration, and textile design have proliferated. For example, Tina Elliott owns and operates The House of Elliott, a retail outlet in Perkins St, Newcastle which sells homewares, furniture and accessories. Tina is a sole trader and has four casual staff. She offers a design consultancy and home staging service. The ‘short consulting’ process involves a visit to a person’s home for two hours to advise them on how they can change their home while ‘staging’ a home involves preparing it for sale. Elliott has opinions about attitudes to design in the city.

Newcastle is growing. Design is emerging here. People are becoming aware of the benefits of it but they don’t want to particularly pay for it and unfortunately because the television is full of design shows, everybody thinks they can do it but they don’t teach you any of the design rules … there are certain rules of design which nobody knows unless you get taught them so they don’t see the value in it (Elliott i/v May 2016).

Elliott’s approach to her work is premised on simplicity. She has eschewed material rewards for lifestyle, saying:

I’ve had my own business since I was 18 and I’m now 50. I’m sort of at the end of working for myself and working for a very long time so I don’t chase business, I wait for people to come to me. There’s no arrogance in this. And the question is, ‘Can I do it? Can I fit it in? Do I want to do it?’ so it’s not all about money. It’s about creating a lifestyle that suits me and allows me to look after my children, keeping it contained, whereas if I was 20 years younger and had more time I could do so much more with my business. I choose not to (Elliott i/v May 2016).

While not keen on using social media such as Facebook to promote her business, Elliott has developed a social media strategy, reluctantly employing someone to manage this:
I was hoping that I could get away with not going into the whole social media market but at the moment I’m having to give in and I’m doing the website and Instagram because people don’t need it but they expect it and this is the thing I struggle with. I’m extremely private and for me I am all about creativity and the general market now, they expect a piece of you. They have this need and hunger for information so they have to know who you are and you have to give it to them. So that’s where I am at the moment. Which is really difficult for me because I am really private (Elliott i/v May 2016).

Many designers, like Elliott, focus on selling the products they design and make. These ‘designer-makers’ also include Jo O’Toole and Jono Everett who design and make furniture, Sophia Emmett and Ange Hailey who design and produce jewellery, Graham Wilson who develops and produces various forms of merchandise, and Liz Anelli who is an illustrator. Trevor Dickinson (also see Fashion Sector) uses the company name, ‘Trevor Dickinson and Jo Steel’. Their work is branded as ‘Newcastle Productions’.

I draw cities and make prints of that work - tea towels, cards, the product that I sell in shops with my drawings. I kind of exploit the drawings as much as possible. And I do mural work as well which is done directly from those drawings of the cities. Also I’m a textile designer and I do work in the textile industry, T-shirt designing, specialising in childrenswear (Dickinson i/v Feb 2015).

Dickinson’s business model is an example of vertical integration as he manufactures, distributes and promotes his work as well as designing it. He says:

I do find now that a lot of my time is spent manufacturing: packing cards, printing tea towels, packing stuff, going to the post office. To maintain a living as an artist who manufactures, I have less and less time for creativity. It’s just me to do the work … All of that time-consuming stuff can be drudgery. I do like the fact that after all these years of people commissioning me, I’m the boss. Everything is my decision. It’s like I’ve got this pretend company. Well, it’s a real company but it feels like an art project. The packaging, promotions, everything is completely for me. The whole thing is overarching, this sort of brand (Dickinson i/v Feb 2015).

Dickinson has been commissioned by Newcastle Council to design and paint murals, first the Newcastle Beach Tunnel and since then others, including a tunnel leading to Merewether Beach which he whimsically re-named ‘The Merewether Aquarium’. He has also painted photo walls at Newcastle Museum which are very popular. One is labelled ‘The Best Looking Couple in Newcastle’ and people stand underneath the sign with their partner and pose for a picture. He also designed a series of portable vinyl photo walls for the Grooving The Moo music festival.

Dickinson asserts that ‘social media is a huge thing for what I do and I use it as much as possible’ (ibid). His Facebook posts created significant interest in the Aquarium mural and over a period of weeks the ‘Likes’ on his page almost doubled as people started sharing pictures which encouraged others to visit the site and do the same.

There is, however, the issue of copyright. Dickinson is philosophical about the pragmatics here realising there are some benefits to this situation: ‘Even my pictures I put online and I never put watermarks on them or anything like that. I kind of like them being shared. Nowadays you can’t fight it. It’s a way of getting work out there and shared’ (ibid). Dickinson has taken up a Renew Newcastle studio space where he is co-located with others including designer and illustrator Liz Anelli.
Anelli reveals that before she took on the Renew Newcastle space, she was working in a tiny second bedroom with no room for the large-scale drawings she was working on. She was going ‘stir crazy’. In addition, she says:

I love the idea of bringing an empty space to life and also of sharing creativity (even if it’s just the occasional stop for a cup of tea) with fellow professionals. It’s great to be part of an organisation that is patiently building such a strong arts network in Newcastle (Renew 2015, online).

A children’s book illustrator who combines traditional techniques and new technology in her creative process, Anelli was born in the UK and graduated with a degree in graphic design from Leicester Polytechnic in 1986. She worked in London at the Natural History Museum and for the Radio Times as a freelance illustrator and as a University teacher. She came to Newcastle in 2012 and in that year re-joined the Society of Children’s Book Writers and Illustrators, attended their Sydney conference, and was picked up by leading children’s book publisher Walker Books. Anelli works with schools and libraries as well as corporate clients. Her studio space through Renew Newcastle is, for her, helpful for collaboration, events and shared learning. Anelli says, ‘I make illustrations – mostly for books, websites and newspapers – using a mixture of drawing, paint, printmaking, collage and computer ‘colouring in’ (Anelli i/v May 2015).

While Anelli is acclaimed, winning numerous awards for her work, book illustration by itself does not provide her with a living wage. She receives approximately one dollar per book and a book will sell 6,000 copies at best. She also does paid workshops and lectures at schools, illustrations and animation work for websites, and develops screen-based apps for organisations such as the Child Protection Agency and Education Services Australia. She also undertakes speed drawing engagements for corporate events. Anelli has received an Australian Society of Authors (ASA) grant of $10,000 for research and travel associated with her work for a book on Lake Eyre, and for a large map of Newcastle Port which she designed for the exterior of the Maritime Centre. For this last work she received support from Newcastle Council, Hunter Development Corporation, Port Corp, Port Waratah Coal Services, Orica and Newcastle Now Business Improvement Association. She actively seeks specific grants and sponsorship:

If I have a commission for a book or something like that, that’s straightforward: there’s a standard fee that you know you are going to get and there’s not much bargaining power on that. But for things like the Port Map project, I went out and got my own funding. So I knew that there was a Council grant for community assistance projects. And then I went to see Phil Ashley-Brown who runs the ABC radio and sat down and had a chat with him, and said ‘Who should I go to and tap for money?’ and he gave me a list of names. And some of them had official application systems that you could go through and others I just wrote to them and said ‘I’m doing this project, it’d be really good for your company, please give me so much amount of money’. And actually, when you ask, a lot of the time they’ve got money sitting there, and they like community projects (Anelli i/v May 2015).

Anelli feels that networking is essential, both on-line and face-to-face. She suggests that connecting is easier in Australia because the industry is smaller:

I used to belong to the Society of Authors in England. But meetings there were either enormous, so there’d be 150 people there and you wouldn’t be able to get to talk to anyone who you thought might be a good person to connect with, or, you know, just like tiny. Whereas I go to the Society of Children’s Book Writers and Illustrators meetings down in Sydney and I’m sitting in the room with probably the key 15 publishers, authors, illustrators in eastern Australia. Because
there aren’t many of them … So it’s really easy to make friends and connections in the book industry here (Anelli i/v May 2015).

Given the ubiquity of digital technology, for Anelli living in a regional city is not an impediment to career success:

I would never say I am a Newcastle artist. I would have never said I am a Leicestershire artist. I am an artist who happens to live in Newcastle. Because it doesn’t matter where you live now, absolutely doesn’t matter at all. Most websites don’t even have a ‘uk’ or an ‘au’ at the end of them. My website just says ‘.com’ at the end … It’s not relevant where you live because you can easily communicate and send images all over the world, via Dropbox or email or something like that (Anelli i/v May 2015).

For Anelli social media is also a way of connecting with peers and her market. She believes:

It is important to build up your media profile and become a desirable speaker at festivals and Book Week events … It’s important to have a strong social media profile, be seen at industry events, write a blog that doesn’t just advertise your own work but celebrates the world of children’s books, writing, drawing and creativity (Anelli i/v May 2015).

Graham Wilson is another local designer who has diverse skills and sources of income. He initially undertook a Certificate in Art at TAFE in Armidale and Newcastle and then completed a Bachelor of Visual Arts at The University of Newcastle. He began teaching art at Ron Hartree’s school and went on to teach Design at Hunter TAFE for almost 20 years. He worked at the University of Newcastle as a demonstrator in print making and at Newcastle Art School (TAFE) teaching art classes including drawing. This work enabled him to continue his practice.

His business, The Carved Greenman, offers stone carving and graphic design. From 2012 until its closure in 2017 he had a retail outlet and small workshop demonstration area along with other creatives at the Renew Newcastle site ‘The Emporium’ in Newcastle where he sold T-shirts, mugs, prints, posters, cards and small sculptures which he designed and made. In 2017 he relocated to a new collaborative workspace, the Creator Incubator in suburban Hamilton North. His skills are diverse:

I think it would be best described by an individual who came into the shop a few months ago, who said, ‘So who did the wood carvings?’ I said, ‘Well, I did those’. He said, ‘Well, who did the t-shirts?’ I said, ‘Oh, I did those as well’. He said: ‘Well who did the graphics?’ ‘Well, I did them too.’ ‘Who does the stone carving?’ ‘That was me, too.’ He said: ‘You’re really hard to pigeonhole’. (Wilson i/v June 2015).

Wilson is also an award-winning actor and has qualifications in film-making, having completed a Certificate 3 in Screen Studies, and a teaching qualification – a Certificate 4 in Training and Assessment. He has expertise and professional experience in visual arts (as a painter and printmaker), graphic design, interior design, set design and stonemasonry. In 2009, Wilson was invited to a stone carving festival in Trondheim, in Norway. The organisers found him by Googling ‘stone carver, stone mason’ and his website came up. Wilson says he is only the second stonemason in the world to have a website (ibid). Through those he met in Trondheim, he was invited to go to the York Minster stone carving festival in the UK the following year. He was then asked to return to Trondheim for the European stone carving festival, which he won with a carving of Odin the Norse god with a blackbird on either side, Huginn and Muninn, forming part of his helmet. He was invited by Nidaros Cathedral in Trondheim to work there for three months in their cathedral workshop, where there was not only stone masonry but also
carpentry, a blacksmith’s forge, a stained-glass section and a mould-making section where they mould all of the carvings:

And it’s all traditional. You have big powered saws for cutting stone but everything else is done by hand – there’s no sort of compressed air tools or anything like that so you feel like you’re carrying on a noble medieval tradition … The cathedral there is 900 years old and I got to work on a part that’s going to go back into the cathedral (Wilson i/v June 2015).

Wilson also has expertise and professional experience as a painter and printmaker, interior designer, and set designer. When he was teaching Graphic Design at Hunter TAFE Wilson earned a reasonable income but since leaving there he works in a private school a few hours a week and has a modest income only from the shop and commissions. The precarity of his business means that his wife’s full-time income is very important to the family. As Wilson asserts ‘she makes a living and I augment that living’ (ibid). He suggests:

The income can be very low. But just when I’m thinking ‘This is hopeless, why am I here, I’m not making money’ – then I’ll have a good week and sales go up or I’ll get a commission, or something like that. So, you know, it’s sometimes one step forward, two steps back, but sometimes it’s three steps forward, every now and then, so I manage to keep my head above water (Wilson i/v June 2015).

As well as the low income, Wilson is aware that creative individuals often have low status. He says he recently took his children to see a movie and when they saw the credits:

I used the opportunity to say to my kids ‘Look at all of those names, all of those people – hundreds of people who have made this thing happen that we have enjoyed, that’s made money for this shopping centre, this theatre, all the actors … the thing is that this is a massive creative concern … and it’s one of the hugest industries, the film industry and the gaming industry is even bigger apparently … Theatre and music, all of those things that make our culture worthwhile, there are all of these people beavering away behind the scenes to make it happen, so I said, ‘Don’t ever let anyone tell you that being in the creative industries is a lesser position, even if the income is less’ … without it this would be a very sad world, I think (Wilson i/v June 2015).

Ange Hailey is another designer/maker who is both culturally and economically active. She runs Studio Melt with her business partner Suzy Manning. Both are jewellery designers. They started with a Renew Newcastle site in Newcastle Mall but after six months they took over the lease commercially. Studio Melt sells studio-made work, mostly locally produced but some of their stock is made by national and international jewellers. Products on sale include ceramics, limited-edition art, cards, handbags and soft furnishings. They also conduct jewellery making classes in the evenings and at weekends and realise the value in a strong social media presence. Instagram and Facebook have been very important for them:

The more we talk about the makers, the more we tell the story behind the products and behind the person making the products, the more people like that I think. Every second day we have a box of stuff that we’ve never stocked before that comes in and that is a great way for us to do new product shots. So, we’ve gotten so many one-off products in here that we never run out of things to photograph. We get people calling up and going, ‘oh I saw this that you posted’ and it works really well for us actually (Hailey i/v, Sept 2015).

Sophia Emmett is also a jeweller. She is based at The Soap Factory, a shared makers’ space which she manages with her partner Jono Everett. Emmett designs products and makes and sells them, mainly to retail outlets and galleries. She previously worked with glass objects and
functional items, but in the last five years has started making jewellery, notably earrings made from coal because she wishes to explore the politics of materials and encourage people to think differently:

Moving to Newcastle and moving away from the glass world – which is very studio-focussed, you need particular equipment so you’re very restricted. So coming here I wanted to use resources that were readily available to me and that were around, so that’s how the coal … well it’s kind of a political statement but it’s also an aesthetic, using the material. At the moment I’m working on prototyping jewellery, which is made from graffiti that falls off near the skate park and using that with plastics that I find on the beach. So, I guess I’m trying to work with materials that are just readily available but also by working with those materials, encouraging people to look at things, give value to things that are around us and maybe just thinking, ‘what if we change the context and the way they’re put together’? That can totally change the value of something (Emmett i/v, Sept 2014).

Emmett sells her work through Studio Melt and has sold online into the USA and Japan. She enjoys the process of design even more than making:

I really enjoy designing. Once you design a product, making it over and over again – although each piece is different - it’s laborious but it’s the design process that I am most interested in, working out how to resolve problems, how to put things together, that sort of thing (Emmett i/v, Sept 2014).

Jo O’Toole is a sculptor and designs furniture for Woodmakers, a business she runs with her husband, furniture maker Warwick O’Toole, and his brother. Their workshop is located in Boolaroo in Lake Macquarie LGA. Jo observes that media has had a strong effect on handmade making:

I do see a strong pull back to the handmade which I think is essential and I think a lot of people want that … I don’t know whether that’s from watching TV shows … It’s a great thing. It’s a fantastic thing. And they are looking at the handmade, especially at the furniture as well … I think in a way they are educating people who are not educated about creative industries which is good (O’Toole i/v, Oct 2015).

Jono Everett is also a furniture designer and fabricator, principally using timber but also steel, acrylic and other materials. He works on commission. His focus is ‘to establish clients that are galleries or small museums’ (Everett i/v Sept 2014), and to provide services including interpretation, graphic design, computing and electronics, and super-fine metal work, which require the input of specialists from all over the country. He says, ‘collaboration is an absolutely critical part of my working method’ (ibid). Digital technology facilitates such collaboration as most communication is via mobile phone. Everett is concerned that the potential of Newcastle is not being realised and that, for him, there appears to be a lack of leadership and vision in the Hunter Region:

I just can’t get my head around how it’s not being seized by the business community and by Council and powers that be, that organically there is a real movement of crafted objects, food, fashion, design, just happening under their feet, and I’m still seeing a huge amount of empty office spaces, shop frontages and gigantic industrial sheds, that it seems if there was a collective understanding of what the potential is that we could really put Newcastle on the map as Australia’s own creative city. We could do it right now with a handful of shakers and movers (Everett i/v Sept 2014).
Mora Argiris started Flourish Interior Design in 2011 after working as a travel consultant for many years collecting art pieces and curios from South America, Africa, India, Asia and North America (HUNTERhunter 2017, online). ‘Initially beginning with a fine arts degree from the University of Newcastle, [she] went on to graduate from Newcastle TAFE’s interior design course’ (Ellsworthy 2014, online). Her business, now located in Bull Street, Cooks Hill, specialises in interior design for commercial, office, retail, hospitality (hotels, bars, restaurants and cafes), residential, medical and health facilities. Argiris also consults on project management, lighting, colour, all hard and soft finishes and wall coverings and is enthusiastic about ‘bespoke design with a strong focus on custom furniture and the salvage and re-purposing of various items and materials’ (Flourish 2017, online). As well as multiple residential clients her portfolio includes commercial clients such as Gather Cafe, Westfield Shopping Centre Newcastle; Six Degrees Restaurant and Bar, Newcastle; The Wharf Shop Cafe/ Restaurant, Newcastle; The Lucky Hotel, Newcastle; John Hunter Hospital Café; El Roma, Westfield Shopping Centre; Scentsations, the Junction; 3 Monkeys Cafe, Cooks Hill; HVRM Newcastle; Azabu Guesthouse, Byron Bay; Rouge Beauty Salon, Cessnock; Talulah Bar & Restaurant, The Junction; Lotus Bar, Cafe & Restaurant; Crysalis Hair, Body, Beauty, Cooks Hill; Indulgence Beauty Therapy; Zinc on Darby, Cooks Hill; and the Newcastle Harbourview Function Centre (Flourish 2017, online). The spaces she creates for her clients are:

Modernist, art deco, textured, natural and understated … I've always loved interior design. I don't feel like I've worked one day, because I enjoy it so much … I like to think of the space as a blank canvas, and then I add accent tones to define the space and make it really individual to the person. I think there are a lot of design-based businesses that are gearing towards apartment-style living. You need to focus on making everything really purpose-bought and compact … If you really source well, you don't need to spend a fortune … Then, focus on bold prints from unlikely places like dealers or artists to add that wow factor (Argiris quoted in Ellsworthy 2014, online).

Believing that ‘interior design, by its very nature, requires collaboration over various disciplines’ (Flourish 2017, online) Argiris works with regional artists and designers. As well as engaging industrial designers and working closely with architectural firms such as Webbers Architects she uses the services of people like local Sean McGilvray, of Oneknotwo, who ‘makes really incredible furniture … He is a very talented woodturner. He can make anything, and everything he creates is so interesting and individual (Argiris quoted in Ellsworthy 2014, online).

9.7.6 Collaborative Workspaces

The INXX Hub in Parry Street, Newcastle West, houses a number of design and design-related businesses including Mezzanine Media, White Magazine and Headjam. The Roost Creative is ‘a community of independent creatives sharing space and ideas’ which hosts ‘a mix of emerging creative and established industry mentors’ (The Roost 2017, online). This workplace is located in the Newcastle CBD and the cost for participants is from $100 a month. The Creator Incubator is a collaborative workspace established in 2017 for artists and designers and is located in suburban Hamilton North. The Soap Factory in the Newcastle suburb of Mayfield was established in 2014 by glass and jewellery designer Sophia Emmett and her partner, furniture designer Jono Everett. It is a 600 square metre industrial shed which houses nine artists including Emmett Everett. Emmett suggests working with others was crucial, and knowing who those people were even more so:
We were here for five years, living in Newcastle, because we had to find out who those other people could be or how we could structure it. So, I guess part of what is happening in Newcastle is that if Jono and I came into this shed and went, ‘Oh yeah, we want this space’, we couldn’t afford it. But because we knew the community a bit and we knew there was potential to get people in and we kind of knew who those people were. That made a huge difference. So I can imagine that there’s all this potential and it’s all great, but unless you’ve got a collective of people to move in you can’t take it on by yourself, or with two people (Emmett i/v, Sept 2014).

What was important was that the artists were not in direct competition with any of the others, but that they were ‘enthusiastic, they work to a high level, they’re in the creative industries, they’re not going to use the space for self-storage, and that they’re proactive in their business’ (ibid). Jono Everett explains:

We sort of had a collective ethos about acknowledging where Newcastle is at the moment and possibilities of that, and as it grew – even though everyone would be running their own individual businesses – that we might be able to promote each business as a collective through, you know, tapping into what’s happening in terms of the changes that are happening to the Newcastle scene, in terms of the burgeoning craft and design industries that are popping up. So everybody has a set of keys here and they’re welcome to come and go. We don’t work as a co-op if you like. Everyone can run their own business and I think that freedom is really important. So when I say we manage it, Sophia and I facilitate that structure – the facilities side of it – as opposed to interfering with anyone’s practices. And I think that sense of freedom is really important for people renting this space. So we’re nearly a year in and it seems to be working well so far … I think the way we’ve set it up seems to be working really well so far (Everett i/v Sept 2014).

Renew Newcastle has also provided affordable studio space and networking opportunities to a number of designers including Trevor Dickinson, Liz Anelli, and jewellery designer/makers Ange Hailey and Suzy Manning. Hailey comments on the value of being able to move out of their garages:

I think that Renew is fantastic. One of the best things we got out of it, I suppose, was meeting a whole bunch of other creative people trying to do what you were trying to do in the same town. As I said before, it can be an isolating experience making things from home and potentially your only contact with the community and other people who are making or buying your products could be at a market but Renew gives you access to a whole bunch of other people doing similar things and it’s nice to be part of that community and meet people through that … Renew, I guess, offered us the opportunity to set up a workshop and give something a go without any financial risk. So perhaps we wouldn't have really done it if we had to find $30,000-50,000 to kind of take out a least and fit our shop. We could do it through Renew in gradual steps. We started off with just a desk and just a couple of cabinets and we built up our stock over time (Hailey i/v, Sept 2015).

9.7.7 Education and Training

The University of Newcastle’s Bachelor of Visual Communication (Design) offers a three-year undergraduate program which provides the students opportunity to study graphic design, web design, information design, human centred design, advertising, illustration, animation and motion graphics among a number of other subjects. They undertake projects where they learn
the ‘fundamentals of the design process from idea to execution. This includes visual hierarchy, symbolic codes of design, persuasive strategies, research, audience engagement and collaboration with industry’ (UON 2017a, online). The students develop their own professional portfolios and ‘engage with international designers and educators renowned for graphic design, advertising, animation, illustration and web design’ (ibid). Professor Mario Minichiello, the Head of Discipline of Design at The University of Newcastle, is one of these.

Professor Minichiello started his professional career in the United Kingdom. He worked for seven years for BBC Newsnight as a reportage illustrator making drawings for events such as the Spycatcher Trials, and pre-television coverage of the House of Commons, including the Guildford Four appeals and Beirut Hostage releases. During his 15-year career he has also worked for the Guardian, The FT, Amnesty International, the Terence Higgins Trust, BBC Enterprises, Longmans, The Times and ITN News. Professor Minichiello's most brazen post was when he worked as an artist during the Afghanistan War. During this time he created the book, *The Art Of Conflict?*, which is a record of reportage drawings of the war. Professor Minichiello also covered the 2007 APEC Summit in Sydney with a range of drawings published in the Sun Herald (UON 2017c, online).

In 1993 Minichiello began work at Loughborough University where he became Head of Department of the College of Art and Design and held the position as Academic Director of Loughborough College of Art and Design. In 2007 he moved to Birmingham City University where he was Chair of Visual Communication. He completed his PhD from Loughborough University before coming to Australia in 2012 where he took up the Chair of Design with the School of Design, Communication and IT at the University of Newcastle. Professor Minichiello has held a research fellowship with the University of Sydney and holds a fellowship with Birmingham Children's Hospital as a visiting Professor in Design Communication. He sees design as having the potential to make a real contribution to the Hunter Region at a time of significant change. He argues that ‘the university when it works properly, is an agent of change [however] the forces of change that are happening here are not merely regional or even national, they’re global’ (Minichiello i/v Sept 2016). He suggests that creativity is central to solving those global problems and reminds us that ‘the core thing about creativity is it’s actually part of what makes us human’ (ibid) and it is his task to go about ‘creating the conditions for creativity’ (ibid).

Like Minichiello, Dr. Melanie James, most recently the Head of School of Design, Communication and IT at the University of Newcastle, also brings her experience as a professional to her educational endeavours. She is a member of the National Education Advisory Committee for the Public Relations Institute of Australia, has run her own PR consultancy firm and prior to this she was the Marketing Communications Manager for the Newcastle Permanent Building Society. She was also a Director of Communications with the Commonwealth Government at the Australian Government Offices (AGO), the Australian Electoral Commission (AEC) and the Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS). Dr James holds a Master of Arts (Journalism) from the University of Technology Sydney and completed her PhD at the University of Newcastle. She is now the Editor of the *Asia Pacific Journal of Public Relations* and has published widely in this area including books such as *Positioning Theory and Strategic Communications: A New Approach to Public Relations Research and Practice* (2014). ‘In addition to a string of teaching commendations and industry awards, in 2015 she won the Public Relations Institute of Australia’s “National PR Educator of the Year 2015” Award’ (UON 2017d, online). James insists that:

> I’ve always approached my communications work from a creative perspective. I see myself as a constructor of meaning and a creator of, a social creator of
meaning. And so therefore I see that as sitting as a creative industry … a lot of what public relations people do is quite performative (James i/v Oct 2016).

From this position James can claim that ‘just as public relations academic research enriched her professional career, Melanie’s work offers practitioners a framework to design public relations strategies’ (UON 2017d, online).

Design is also taught at Hunter TAFE which offers Certificate and Diploma level training in graphic design, fashion design, interior design and industrial design. Its Design Centre-Hunter is a ‘collaborative hub’ for project-based learning in broad design disciplines including building, graphic, interior, fashion, furniture, hairdressing, industrial, kitchen, sign-writing and floristry. Furniture designer Jono Everett expressed concerns, however, about funding cuts to arts programs. He is of the view that quality training is important and cannot be replaced by quick online tutorials:

I think it’s a bit frightening what’s happening with TAFE and universities. If those things are being eroded, then they need to be replaced. I think, you know, handing on high level skill sets in all mediums is really important for the future of arts and crafts, and society in general. I think a lot of people are YouTubing how to make stuff and that’s great, people are having a crack, and there’s that whole burgeoning industry of craft and it’s got a place. But I also think it’s really important that we don’t lose sight that it’s not as easy as just YouTubing how to do something and 20 minutes later you’re doing it. There’s a lifetime – I’m still learning, I wouldn’t consider myself a great woodworker by any stretch of the imagination. There’s a lifetime of learning and I’m constantly learning and I’m seeking that knowledge actively (Everett i/v Sept 2014).

Private providers include the Pumphouse School of Design, which offers short courses and workshops for professionals and others in areas from design software programs to hand-lettering of typography, and Hunter Design School, which offers courses in interior design, graphic design, animation, and events. Donna Burrell established the Hunter Design School in 2010 and is its Principal and Creative Director. The School offers accredited Interior Design and Graphic Design training up to Diploma level and students are drawn from Port Macquarie, Muswellbrook and the Central Coast. Burrell asserts that the employment prospects for graphic designers in the Hunter Region are especially strong, including as embedded creatives:

Graphic design is huge, the fastest-growing industry. Everybody wants a graphic designer now. People are not so much going to agencies, but they want to employ those sorts of people because everything is about design. It could be desktop publishing in an accountancy firm, web designers, they need back ends on their webs - the interface, people are needing brochures, they are needing advertisements, they are needing design-thinking actually in their companies. Interior design and architecture are not so strong but still are growing, in part because of television shows like The Block and DIY shows. People are seeing it on TV and thinking, ‘It’s easy. I can do that. I want it’ and so they try, or they just employ someone, so it’s actually benefitted our industry (Burrell i/v, Sept 2016).

While various colleges (SEEK Learning, Open Colleges) offer online training in Design, the Hunter Design School is located in a dynamic area of Newcastle West alongside many others also working in the creative industries including venues such as The Edwards. The Edwards café, owned and run by former Silverchair bassist Chris Joannu, hosts events such as book launches, ideas bombing and the Impossible Markets. Located nearby, Earps Tiles and Classic Blinds service the interior design and architecture sectors, and next door is not only Tap Pups dance school but also the INXX Hub where approximately 50 creatives work in photography,
sound engineering, film and television, graphic design, industrial design and publishing (White Magazine, a bridal magazine).

9.8 Conclusion

The advertising and design sector of the creative industries is located primarily in the urban centre of the valley. This sector does not include fashion or architecture (they are detailed in separate sections) nor does it contain those who are embedded as designers in other industries. Of those who identify as holding an occupation in this sector there are 2,870 people working within design in the region, with most of these located in the larger urban centres. This figure makes this sector the largest in the region.

There is a wide variety of employment possibilities within the advertising and design sector and most are well represented in the Hunter. Many workers inside this sector develop their skills through a program of study at University or TAFE or at a private college. However, many are self-taught or learn ‘on the job’. Digital skills are fundamentally important for many working in this sector but traditional skills continue to be important. The operatives work primarily in full-service advertising agencies who increasingly offer a broad spectrum of services that intersect with design and PR agencies. These agencies offer services across the range of ‘real world’ and digital economy applications and while they are physically located in the Hunter Region, a number work nationally. These agencies tend to work on commissions which may be earned dependent on the media form targeted. The profit from these commissions is placed against production costs and any fixed costs such as wages which is where many of the people identified in this study earn their income. Work is increasingly outsourced to specialist design houses or video companies. Nearly all projects are calculated on an hourly rate or else a fixed price will be agreed to be paid on completion of the project.

Many of the operatives who work within and for these agencies also operate within other areas of the creative industries such as music, film and the art world. The roles, and also the recognition of these important cultural workers, are being steadily blurred across sectors with many moving easily across sectoral boundaries. The design field in particular has claimed an increasingly wide array of activities that has moved beyond traditional graphic design and now includes activities such as jewellery design and many others. Not only did the advertising world give birth to design agencies but PR agencies have modelled themselves on this way of working industrially. The art collectives from an earlier time have now become collaborative workspaces, production hubs and co-working spaces run as enterprises for those who fund and constitute them. Education and training in the region has increasingly become an important adjunct to the creative activities of these fields with many educators moving between industry and academia.