

***Employment, Education and Training Act 1988***

**Response to the *Review of the Institute  
of Advanced Studies*: Report of the  
National Board of Employment,  
Education and Training**

The Hon. John Dawkins, MP  
Minister for Employment, Education and Training

April 1991





**NATIONAL BOARD OF  
EMPLOYMENT, EDUCATION AND TRAINING**

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The Hon Peter Baldwin MP  
Minister for Higher Education  
and Employment Services  
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Dear Minister

In your letter of 8 November 1990 you formally referred to the National Board the report of the Committee to Review the Institute of Advanced Studies of the Australian National University. As I foreshadowed in my reply of 27 November 1990, I asked the Australian Research Council and the Higher Education Council for advice on the report, and their comments were considered in conjunction with the report at the Board meeting on 13-14 December 1990. Following that consideration, I am pleased to forward to you the response of the Board to the Review of the Institute of Advanced Studies.

Before dealing with specific recommendations, I should say that the Board and the two Councils expressed strong support for the general tenor of the report and for the philosophy underlying the recommendations. In particular, the Board commented favourably on the report's recognition of the responsibility of universities to justify their work to the community, given the extent to which they receive public funding. The Board also endorsed the emphasis in the report on the importance of interchange with all parts of the higher education system to strengthen the role of the Institute as a national resource.

In other general comments the Board suggested that the advisory bodies for each research school, when established, might set targets for outside funding to be attracted, as percentages of its budget. The percentage would clearly vary from school to school in proportion to the capacity of each to attract outside funding, including that arising from commercial activities. The Board believes that the principle is one for all higher education institutions to consider, with the Institute having a particular responsibility to provide leadership in this regard because of its favourable level of funding. The Commonwealth Scientific and Industrial Research Organisation was described as a useful example of an organisation successfully restructuring and redefining its culture in this and other ways.

For the sake of clarity I will list specific comments from the Board and Councils under the appropriate recommendation. Comments made by Councils were in general accepted by the Board.

#### **Institute Mission (Recommendation 1)**

The Board suggested that this recommendation should also refer to the Institute's legislative requirement to engage in research and provide postgraduate training "in areas of national importance to Australia", as is noted in the body of the text (page 17).

#### **Consultative Council (Recommendation 3)**

The new Consultative Council was recommended in the review in order to provide broadly-based advice on the Institute's research strategies. While strongly supporting this objective, the Board considers that the composition proposed is insufficiently representative of the non-academic community and suggests that the two proposed nominees of the Consultative Committee from the Australian Academies be replaced by up to three members representing business, unions and the wider community. In making this suggestion, the Board was not intending to undervalue the contribution that could be made by the inclusion of active researchers, but it considers that there will be ample opportunity for input from this sector, whereas the wider society generally and the world of work in particular has useful perspectives to offer but no formal avenue to do so.

#### **Advisory Bodies (Recommendations 4 and 5)**

In addition to the Consultative Council, the report proposes an advisory body specific to each research school and larger centre so that priorities are established and reviewed (recommendation 4), and an Advisory Committee to oversee the recommended program of interaction with the wider university system (recommendation 5). The Australian Research Council felt that there could be some confusion over the various responsibilities of these different bodies.

With respect to the Advisory Committee for the interaction program, the Australian Research Council strongly endorsed the comments in the report about the importance of other universities being equal partners in the enterprise, and suggested that increased representation from the universities would encourage this sense of ownership.

**Postgraduate Training and the ANU Graduate School  
(Recommendation 8)**

Both Councils and the Board commented on the low level of postgraduate training currently undertaken at the Institute, given its level of research funding, and strongly endorsed proposals to increase the Institute's role in this area, and to improve the mobility of Australian postgraduate students generally.

The Higher Education Council considered that, within the present organisational framework of the ANU, the Graduate School provided a useful link between the Institute and the Faculties, but noted that Professor Chubb was currently consulting interested parties on the organisation of higher education in the ACT with a view to advising on the implications of the review's recommendations.

**John Curtin School of Medical Research (Recommendation 12)**

Both Councils expressed some doubts over the effectiveness of the changes in funding and control proposed in the report to improve the performance of the John Curtin School. The Higher Education Council commented that it was not clear from the evidence presented in the report that funding by the National Health and Medical Research Council would be the most appropriate mechanism to solve the problems identified.

**Implementation of Review (Recommendation 13)**

While agreeing that progress towards implementation should be monitored, the Board would also have welcomed stronger direction on specific outcomes to be achieved within a set time scale. In this context, the Board recommends that you ask Professor Brennan, as Chair of the Australian Research Council and member of the review team, to report to the National Board before the end of 1992 on progress towards implementation and on expected targets for further progress where appropriate.

**Further Reviews (Recommendation 14)**

The need for a review at some future time was accepted, with the Australian Research Council specifying that the next one should take place in no more than ten years, and that the Council should be represented on the review team.

I regret the length of this letter. The serious consideration given by the Board to this review is an indication not only of its importance, but also of the value of the cross-sectoral, community-based expertise available from the combined Board membership. As a result, the Board was able to provide a wider perspective than that of the Councils alone, and I felt it was useful for you to have the detailed response.

I draw your attention to the provisions of the Employment, Education and Training Act 1988, for advice on formal references to be tabled in both Houses of Parliament as soon as practicable.

I am sending a copy of this letter to Mr Dawkins, as the senior Portfolio Minister.

Yours sincerely



G A Ramsey  
Chair  
National Board  
14 January 1991