



**Australian Government**  
**Department of Education,  
Science and Training**

**HIGHER EDUCATION REPORT**

**2005**

# Higher Education Report **2005**



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The *Higher Education Report 2005* is the second of a series of annual reports which replace the Higher Education Triennium Report series produced by the Department of Education, Science and Training (DEST) since 1988. This report is based on the calendar year.

This Report provides:

- an overview of the higher education sector and its achievements in 2005, including ongoing implementation of the *Our Universities: Backing Australia's Future* package of higher education reforms, new Australian Government policies and recent sector developments;
- details of funding under the *Higher Education Support Act 2003*;
- a review of the performance of higher education providers in delivering student places and other Australian Government funded outcomes in 2005; and
- information on funding allocations in 2005.

Following from the *2002 Review of Higher Education*, the Australian Government announced a package of new higher education policies in the 2003-04 Budget, to be implemented between 2004 and 2008. Legislation to give effect to the *Our Universities: Backing Australia's Future* reform package, the *Higher Education Support Act 2003* (the HESA) was passed by Parliament on 5 December 2003.

2005 represented the first year in which the majority of the Australian Government's higher education reforms were introduced. Funding allocations for 2005 are set out in the various tables and figures throughout this report.



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### **Our Universities: Backing Australia's Future**

2005 was a very significant year for higher education in Australia with the majority of the *Our Universities: Backing Australia's Future* reforms initiatives coming on line. Under the reform package, the Australian Government has committed to an increased investment of \$11 billion over ten years in higher education and embarked on a wide-ranging reform agenda to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of our higher education system and the choices available to students.

The *Our Universities: Backing Australia's Future* initiatives implemented in 2005 included:

- the Commonwealth Grant Scheme;
- a conditional increase to the Commonwealth Grant Scheme;
- the Higher Education Workplace Relations Requirements;
- a Transition Fund;
- the allocation of new Commonwealth supported places;
- the introduction of Funding Agreements;
- a new student contributions system for Commonwealth supported places;
- a new Higher Education Loan Programme;
- changes to the number of fee-paying places permitted in undergraduate courses (including medicine);
- increased funding for the Indigenous, equity and disability support programmes;
- the Collaboration and Structural Reform Fund; and
- enhanced overseas audits.

### **Consultation with the sector**

The department continued to consult widely with the higher education sector through a variety of forums on implementing the *Our Universities: Backing Australia's Future* package of reforms. Major consultation has been conducted on reform initiatives such as the *Higher Education Support Act 2003* (HESA) guidelines, the Carrick Institute for Learning and Teaching in Higher Education, the Learning and Teaching Performance Fund, new equity measures, new scholarships programmes, new collaboration measures, quality audits, higher education private provider guidelines and the Higher Education Information Management System.

Information on implementing reforms was continually disseminated to the sector through the department's website and the *Our Universities: Backing Australia's Future* newsletter.

From 2005, each institution that receives funds under the Commonwealth Grant Scheme enters into a funding agreement with the Australian Government, specifying the number of places and the discipline mix that will be supported. The funding agreements are negotiated each year in the context of each

institution's mission and strategic direction for course provision. Funding Agreement meetings were conducted with all universities in 2005.

The new accountability framework, the Institution Assessment Framework, was introduced to replace the annual Educational Profiles system. Detailed bilateral discussions between the department and individual institutions occur every two years. About half of all the Table A providers were visited in 2005.

## 2005-06 Budget

The *Our Universities: Backing Australia's Future* reform package was enhanced by additional initiatives announced in the 2005-06 Budget.

The Australian Government invested a further \$31.9 million in new initiatives in the 2005-06 Budget to provide students with better facilities and more course options across a range of campuses.

The Australian Government provided \$13.9 million over four years to establish two new undergraduate courses in veterinary science and tropical agriculture at James Cook University. The University received 50 new undergraduate places for the veterinary science course and a further 50 new places for the tropical agriculture course to commence in 2006. These 100 new places will increase to 273 places by 2009.

In recognition of the fact that better infrastructure is the key to maintaining excellence in higher education, the Australian Government provided the University of Western Sydney with \$25 million over three years to boost teaching infrastructure for students at its campuses. This initiative will improve the University's teaching and research capacity through funding for a new library at Penrith, upgraded research and teaching infrastructure at Hawkesbury, a medical training facility at Campbelltown and a new teaching building at Parramatta.

The Australian Government's commitment to the higher education sector is ongoing. New investments included:

- \$15.5 million for infrastructure and new places in teaching, nursing and medicine over four years at the University of Notre Dame Australia's new Sydney campus;
- \$12 million towards the infrastructure costs of a new veterinary science school (to house the new veterinary science students) at James Cook University;
- \$10 million towards the capital cost of a new medical school at the University of Wollongong;
- \$5.9 million for 100 new undergraduate places in radiation therapy by 2009; and
- \$2 million for an upgrade of communications and information technology systems at Charles Darwin University.

## Legislation

In 2005, a number of Acts were enacted in Parliament to ensure the smooth and effective transition to the new higher education funding arrangements under the *Higher Education Support Act 2003* (HESA) and to implement the 2005-06 Budget measures.

More information on the legislation passed in 2005 is at Appendix C of this report.

A number of guidelines were also registered and tabled in 2005 to establish the operational requirements of various policies and programmes set out in the HESA. A list of the HESA guidelines tabled in both Houses of Parliament during 2005 is at Appendix D of this report. The guidelines can be found at <http://www.backingaustraliasfuture.gov.au/guidelines.htm>.