

From the office of the
Deputy Vice-Chancellor
Professor Glenice Hancock

Central Queensland UNIVERSITY

Where Students Come First

19 December, 1997.
Ms. Claire White,
Committee Secretary to the
Review of Higher Education Financing and Policy,
c/- Higher Education Division,
Department of Employment Education Training and Youth Affairs,
CANBERRA. A.C.T. 2600.

Fax: 02 6240 9780.

Dear Ms. White,

re: Response to Discussion Paper

Central Queensland University welcomes the opportunity to comment on the Discussion Paper released by the Committee. We wish to compliment the Committee on the process adopted of releasing a discussion draft and seeking comment prior to preparing a final report with recommendations.

The Discussion Paper and its detailed appendices have raised significant issues and placed them firmly on the agenda for debate within the higher education sector and the broader community. The Paper has been the basis for many discussions within this University and was the focus for a recent one day seminar of a representative cross section of the University community.

The attached Paper was developed out of the discussions and debate that occurred during that seminar. The authors who synthesised the issues of particular interest expressed on the day, are also representative of the whole University. The response was co-ordinated by Professor Trevor Arnold (Faculty of Health Science) with co-authors Ms. Marilyn Van Dyke (Director, Counselling Careers and Health) and Mr. Kent Farrell (representing the Postgraduate Student Association).

A separate but complimentary response has been prepared by Ms. Lynette Anderson, Acting Head of the Capricornia Aboriginal and Islander Tertiary Education Centre (CAITEC) on behalf of the Indigenous Peoples of Central Queensland University. The University commends CAITEC's response to the Committee for its consideration

Yours sincerely,

Glenice Hancock,
Deputy Vice-Chancellor.

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Response to
LEARNING FOR LIFE

Review of Higher Education Financing and Policy
A Discussion Paper

The Discussion Paper can be viewed as a positive direction for Higher Education in Australia. It identifies potential concerns about competition, deregulated and rapidly changing environments for universities and the need to develop strategic alliances as significant issues for all institutions to focus their future plans. It places emphasis upon civic values and the development of global citizens rather than the potential stereotypical emphasis upon discipline based and professional oriented education.

We support the need for education to become more cost-effective but it must be driven by quality outcomes not simply measured by productivity. We also support concern about institutions needing to be more knowledgeable about the cost of education delivery.

If institutions can operate in both efficient and effective ways, then it is felt that the balance of "private" and "public" benefit that is derived from higher education can be maintained and help Australia move forward as a nation. Failure to strike an appropriate balance between teaching, learning and research will be detrimental to the nation. While the more-for-less approach may serve some short-term political benefit, most certainly in the long-term, this approach would be disastrous for Australia as a nation in attempting to maintain a strong position in the global higher education marketplace.

HIGHER EDUCATION IN A GLOBAL CONTEXT

Central Queensland University supports the concept of competition within the higher education domain. Competition is inevitable in a world that is facing rapidly changing formats for the delivery of education, including delivery that extends beyond national boundaries. However, we believe that competition has the potential to reduce Australia's capacity to be a global supplier of quality education if it is not addressed in an appropriate manner.

As the higher education industry expands globally we should be looking at opportunities to encourage national co-operation (rather than fierce competition) that can enable Australia to provide and become a muted and powerful competitor in the international higher education marketplace. National co-operation - not institutional competition - should hallmark this approach.

STUDENT CENTRED FUNDING MODELS

Central Queensland University supports the concept of a student centred funding model for Higher Education in the years ahead as we believe the model has the potential to increase student options and to generate quality outcomes. However, we wish to draw the committee's attention to a number of issues. In every case the issues are based upon what are perceived to be false or untested assumptions made by the West Committee.

1. The funding base for five years of education has been established by the West Committee in dollar terms. This has been done despite the fact that the Committee has stated that institutions do not know the cost to deliver education. We feel that far more cost analysis should take place before figures are established, however, we support the concept of five years of education if Australia is to become a 'clever' country.
2. We acknowledge the need to offer students value for their educational investment. Some students will demand a great deal of face to face contact whilst others will be more satisfied with information technology (IT) packages of educational material. By universities being encouraged to undertake a more detailed cost analysis, different courses may be offered at a variety of costs. This offers the opportunity to create a variety in delivery format plus differential prices for students undertaking the same degree.
3. We express concern about the Paper's claim that increasing use of IT in teaching will drive down teaching costs. This statement is based upon the Discussion Papers concern that no-one has shown that they are yet able to determine, in an accurate and documented fashion, the actual costs of teaching.
4. The Discussion Paper assumes that most students do, or will have, access to computers of sufficient capacity to access the Internet and, moreover that they will also have/be able to afford modem access for those computers. Our experience strongly contradicts these assumptions. It is true of some students, but they are a minority of our students. We see no reason to believe that this situation will change remarkably in the next few years. It may therefore be wrong to assume that an IT delivery of education will lead to a reduction in costs in most situations.

Whilst we support a student centred funding model we also acknowledge that quality outcomes must be a factor in government support. We therefore support a student centred funding model that also rewards university's through performance-based funding.

EQUITY

We wish to strongly endorse the government's, and this university's, support for the identified DEETYA target groups that include Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders, people from the lower socio-economic status groups and people with disabilities. Our experience of dealing with these groups has sometimes identified a need for additional support during their university study. In many instances they also require additional study time to complete their qualifications. These equity issues are not apparent in any of the proposed funding models.

Whilst we have previously stated that we support a student funded model for education it has the potential to raise further equity issues. If student centred funding is based upon a flag-fall rate, with the student having to supplement the base funding, there will be many programs that become inaccessible for a number of students from lower socio-economic groups; a major DEETYA targeted group identified that has continued to be under-represented in higher education.

The Discussion Paper does not address issues relating to the cost of living for students. For students primarily from rural and low socio-economic groups the cost of living whilst they are engaged in study is an extremely important issue. Financial support from parents is difficult for these students and the Austudy provision often does not cover the costs of living to enable them to cover education and living costs. While the review endorses an entitlement for all to a certain quantum of higher education, this principle is severely undermined if in practice people are unable to utilise this opportunity through a lack of financial support for living throughout the period of study. The idea of a (means test free) loan available to all students repayable in a similar fashion to HECS would complement the existing proposals and enable a greater degree of participation particularly from the disadvantaged.

THE AUSTRALIAN AGENDA

For the past two decades Australia has attempted to promote the concept of a 'clever' country. Education has been portrayed as one of the modes for our nation becoming more 'clever'. The Discussion Paper supports this notion but fails to separate the current context from the future context in which education will be operating.

1. The Discussion Paper identifies the growing need and demand for education. The analysis for this need and demand is founded upon the current university situation. The Discussion Paper fails to address two new agendas.

i. Whilst acknowledging a growing need and demand for education it is incorrect to assume that this growth will continue to be in the university sector. Australia has deregulated post-secondary education with many private providers entering the trade, business, para-professional, and industrial sectors of the education market place. We cannot assume that these education options will not poach a major proportion of the students that would formerly have viewed universities as their only option in the past.

ii. The Discussion Paper acknowledges that some international distance education providers can deliver degrees (and selected components of degrees) at prices that are as much as 15% of current university delivery charges. Whilst this may be the case, not all Australian students want this delivery format and current home based telecommunication (and IT) hardware does not cater for students, particularly rural and regionally based students.

2. The Australian Government has promoted research and development as another medium for Australia becoming a 'clever' country. The Discussion Paper is relatively silent on the research agenda. It fails to identify the value (both private and public value) of research degrees. Advanced critical thinking is generated from research degrees and institutional research cultures. Teaching is the product of universities but research and development provides future direction and has the potential to dramatically improve a university's regional, national and international value. This is a significant issue that warrants more discussion within future drafts of the report.

The Discussion Paper makes comparatively little reference to the issue of post-graduate students, particularly research students. Research undertaken by postgraduate students makes a significant contribution to the social fabric of this country. Their work has a direct and positive influence on the nation and the way we are viewed. We must maintain graduates with the highest possible standards and encourage their research development whenever we have the opportunity.

3. Australian education has continually been founded upon literacy and more recently higher education has been based upon the preparation for lifelong learning. We are concerned that this agenda must be re-addressed in our evolving society and we ask that greater emphasis be given to these issues by the review panel. The Discussion Paper fails to place enough emphasis upon new and evolving literacies such as IT literacy, research and information management skills and critical thinking. These literacies are essential for students to not only succeed with their current and future studies but also to succeed in their chosen careers as well as in their contribution to society.

4. Universities in the United States are assisted in their mission by a number of philanthropic organisations. We propose that a Federal Government initiated incentive system be developed to encourage business and industry to invest in (support), Australian Universities and their infrastructures to a greater extent than is currently the case. This proposal may be

facilitated through taxation incentives similar to those which were offered to the Australian Film Industry. It would also seem that there are other creative financial arrangements which could be devised to stimulate injections of private funding into the higher education sector and further reduce its dependence on government funding.

5. Universities in Australia are more than institutions for delivery of higher education. This is evident in all situations but is particularly the case for universities in regional communities. We refer you to CQU's original submission to the West Review.

Regional universities become a focal point for community development, cultural and economic initiatives, community based research and community sport and recreation. They are a major employer group and make significant contribution to regional economies. They have the potential to assist the life-long learning of the region as a whole as well as the individuals within.

We ask that the Review Panel recognise these community roles of a university when the next draft of the report is produced.

Central Queensland University's Indigenous peoples response to the West Review

Submission by CAITEC

The Report *Learning for Life* is virtually silent in its considerations of the implications for Australia's Indigenous peoples of the proposed revised funding and policy procedures for higher education. While Indigenous numbers in higher education are small, the significance of higher education for Indigenous people is paramount as it enables Indigenous people to access a far broader range of those opportunities essential to achieving self-determination.

The increased participation of Indigenous peoples in higher education in recent years, is now being accompanied by a decrease in school-leaver enrolments as well as enrolments by males. In addition, the attrition rates of Indigenous students is the highest of all the targeted equity groups. Moreover, the number of Indigenous students in the 15 - 19 years age group attending school is only 49 per cent, compared with the general population where the figure is approximately 90 per cent. In addition only 25 per cent of Indigenous students stay on at school until Year 12, compared with 77 per cent of the general population.

Within this context it is ironic that comment is being sought on the broader funding of higher education, when a number of factors are impacting upon the participation of Indigenous students in higher education. The outcome of ignoring Indigenous interests in higher education at this time may be to stream Indigenous peoples into sub-tertiary courses which are non-professional or offered through other than higher education providers. In addition, other factors such as the proposed tightening of the means test for Abstudy and the introduction of differential HECS rates, have meant that the more expensive courses, such as Law and Medicine which are critical to the public well-being of Indigenous peoples, are become increasingly unavailable at a time when they are crucial to Indigenous self-determination. With such low participation and success rates for Indigenous peoples in education overall it is too early to be introducing measures into the broader higher education agenda which respond to the mainstream demand for the marketisation and customisation of education, and consequently disadvantage those groups who have only recently participated in the higher education agenda. An approach to higher education based on freedom of the market will undermine the rights and interests of Indigenous peoples in the community.

However, in facilitating the achievement of equitable outcomes for Indigenous peoples, universities need to examine their own philosophies, policies and practices so as to reconceptualise and reconstruct the purposes of their existence. According to MacIntyre (cited in Kemrnis, 1994, p. 6), although universities now more closely mirror the diversity that constitutes Australian society, they are culturally positioned as

places where conceptions of and standards of rational justification are elaborated, put to work in the detailed practices of enquiry, and themselves rationally evaluated, so that only from the university can the wider society learn how to conduct its own debates, practical or theoretical, in a rationally defensible way. But that claim itself can be plausibly and justifiably advanced only when and insofar

as the university is a place where rival and antagonistic views of rational justification ... are afforded opportunity to develop.

However, for Indigenous peoples who are still positioned at the periphery of this cultural position, universities may be seen as places that further perpetuate and legitimise ideologies that sanction or even promote the exclusion of Indigenous knowledge through their rational justifications, practices of enquiry and construction of debates. Universities need to be more attentive to how they can engage Indigenous peoples and their knowledge in that dialogue. Kirkness and Barnhardt (1991) argue that it is expected that those coming to university will adapt to the cultural setting of the university. However, for Indigenous peoples, attending university involves participating from their specific cultural knowledge base. Therefore, they need to have their own cultural backgrounds and integrity affirmed within the university environment.

The establishment of a British colony at Sydney Cove on Indigenous lands in 1788 was based on the concept of *terra nullifles*. Central to the application of this doctrine was the non-recognition of Indigenous sovereignty. When it became apparent that Indigenous peoples did in fact exist, policies such as genocide, protection, assimilation and integration were implemented over a period of two hundred years to solve the 'problem' of their existence. The latter policies of assimilation and integration attempted to effect the disappearance of Indigenous peoples through their incorporation into the already established Anglo-Australian hegemonic structures. By the 1960s, Indigenous peoples within Australia had taken on a more political and public profile as illustrated by the Land Rights movement and the Tent Embassy (Lippman, 1994). While these efforts by Indigenous people were about re-assertion of Indigenous sovereignty, and their repositioning with respect to equal and civil rights, the government responses were anchored to Anglo-centric notions of equity. The outcome was more policies offering 'more of the same', providing Indigenous peoples with equity to access of that which other Australians were seen to be entitled to. This presumed that the promotion and implementation of equity policies would rectify the "Indigenous problem" in socio-economic terms and ensure that the rights of Indigenous peoples were consistent with the rights of other Australians.

However, the Indigenous peoples of Australia see themselves as having an inalienable right to be Indigenous, as well as the right to be self-determining. Thus their inclusion within an equity funding framework precludes any legal or government recognition of them as the sovereign peoples of Australia. However, efforts at equity which advance the interests of individuals and disregard their collective position as Indigenous peoples is seen as yet another means of continuing the project of assimilating Indigenous peoples, with education being a key tool and site for this policy intervention.

For Australia's Indigenous peoples the Report "*Learning for Life*" which subsumes Indigenous issues into the broader equity framework, creates tension between its focus on providing Indigenous people with access to an education intended to make them more competitive in the 'mainstream', but failing to acknowledge the aspirations of Indigenous peoples to become self-determining through their 'getting a fair share' of the educational dollar for their own educational purposes and outcomes. *The National Review of Education for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples* argues that treating equity and access as unproblematic, and using what are supposedly culturally neutral measures to identify this participation, ignores the dilemmas of higher education participation for many Indigenous peoples (DEET, 1995, p. 21).

For Indigenous people self-determination is about making informed choices and decisions. Education for Indigenous communities and each individual is central to the sustaining of Indigenous cultures and for the development of the skills and expertise needed in order to be a vital part of the twenty first century. Self determination is about creating appropriate structures for the transmission of culture, knowledge and wisdom for the benefit of both Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australians.

A renegotiation of the Indigenous position within universities can be framed in what Kirkness and Barnhardt (1991) espouse as the four Rs: Respect, relevance, reciprocity and responsibility . These four basic principles imply that: *respect* is afforded Indigenous peoples by recognising their cultural identity and integrity; *relevance* of curricula to Indigenous peoples can be brought about through institutional legitimisation and inclusion of Indigenous knowledge and skills; *reciprocity* is about the shared arrangement in the production of knowledge; and that *responsibility* is given to Indigenous peoples to take control over what they see as appropriate education. To do this, universities must recognise and incorporate the sovereign position of Indigenous peoples whereby they are acknowledged as equal stakeholders in the provision of education for not only Indigenous Australians but for all Australians.

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