

Mr Roderick West
Chairman
Review committee on Tertiary Education

Dear Mr West

I have read the Discussion Paper with interest , and although it is convoluted and very general, I have the following comments to make.

1. Instilling a culture of lifetime learning in our community is an admirable altruistic goal but human nature being as it is, this commitment would take several years if ever to achieve. I would think that enabling graduates to play a productive role in a modern economy would have far greater chances of success.
2. The statement is also made “No Australian with the intellectual ability to succeed is denied access.”.....to higher education I agree, but who sets the standards? Of achievement, which I hope are not geared to the lowest common denominator.
3. The statement that students should be the ones to make decisions about study options is satisfactory, so long as the students don't influence the outcome of those options. Furthermore “being more accountable to students is really a platitude when many students do NOT have any idea what they want. Perhaps the options should be MORE CLEARLY explained to them.
4. Finances really should have nothing at all to do with outcomes. Unfortunately it often does. I personally agree with the voucher system. (or whatever one wishes to call it) Then perhaps the “Dawkaversities” established by Mr Dawkins will go to the wall. These are too many “Mickey Mouse” courses. I also agree that students should contribute to the cost of their education, (eg. HECS either direct or indirectly or indirectly after graduation). Although conferred degrees/diplomas may indirectly benefit the community it is essentially of benefit to the person who gains the degree. I am a little concerned about post secondary education for all. Some people in the system now are really incapable of post secondary education. Why oh why were Colleges of Advanced Education abandoned. More CAE's and TAFES I would say.
5. Competition is good and I have no trouble with the Internet which is excellent for distance learning courses that require no hands on experience. However this anomaly could be overcome with summer schools or inter/semester schools. I also agree that changes brought about by the digital revolution will force Tertiary institutions to rethink how services are provided. The Mozart analogy is certainly opposite for hands in courses. The present teaching model is simply incapable of meeting learning needs of the 21st Century for “non-hands on courses”.
6. The HECS should be paid to the institutions and not the government. The institutions and not the government. The institutions would then have to be more accountable to the students, same as the voucher system. The student pays so much, the government issue voucher pays so much which is could be variable dependent upon course undertaken. This would be death to “Mickey Mouse” courses and by necessity the introduction of often cost courses. However, these ideas would need to be backed by a COMMON ENTRY SYSTEM. The verging entry requirements for each institution and each state are bygone anomalies. It is ridiculous that a country of this size has separate entry requirements for each state.
7. These should be GROUP RESEARCH rather than spreading money too thinly over several institutions. At least 2-3 of the reviewers for Research grants should be from OVERSEAS. I don't wish to be told they are invariable. Poppycock! There also needs to be an improvement in the transfer of money, research and skills not only between Tertiary Institutions but also Industry. Also better balance between Tertiary and Research.

8. If one has to have a model? Then I prefer model 2. Where students contribute to their own education. Scholarships and Bursaries can cope with those who find it difficult to pay for their education.

Kind regards
Yours sincerely

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[\[Return to Top\]](#) [\[Return to Index\]](#)