

GREATER GREEN TRIANGLE POST SECONDARY EDUCATION CONSORTIUM

RESPONSE TO WEST REVIEW POLICY DISCUSSION PAPER ON HIGHER EDUCATION FINANCING AND POLICY

The GGTRA Post Secondary Education Consortium which represents higher education and VET providers in the Greater Green Triangle Region is generally supportive of the major recommendations outlined in the discussion paper *Learning for Life*. However, we are concerned that the Discussion Paper fails to address key issues impacting on the future provision of higher and further education for our region and other rural regions of Australia.

GENERAL COMMENTS

Submitting Organisations

We have noted the list of submitting individuals and organizations. We have concluded that Australia's regional and rural communities have not been well represented in the Review. This may account for the lack of attention in the discussion paper to the future needs of regional Australia regarding the provision of higher and further education into the 21st century.

Regional Role of Post Secondary Education

We do not believe the Discussion Paper addresses the critical role played by the post secondary education sector in the economic and cultural development of Australia's regional communities. This is a little surprising given the focus of a number of submissions on this matter, including the submission of the GGTRA Consortium to the Committee. The arguments raised regarding the importance of post secondary education provision to regional communities were endorsed in the Committee's commissioned paper *Assessing the Economic Contribution of Regional Universities*.

As a group we support the focus of the Discussion Paper regarding the future provision of lower cost quality education utilising flexible delivery and electronic communications technology. However, in the final report we would look for a clear acknowledgement of the importance of person to person contact and the social environment as critical factors in student learning, particularly for younger students. To this end the provision of quality pre-employment on campus courses at regionally located universities needs to be given a higher priority in the final report.

We submit that the final report and any policy recommendations need to support and enhance the role of regional post secondary education institutions in their contribution to the cultural and economic development of Australia's regional communities and to the sustainability of those communities. An innovative future policy for higher and further education must ensure that any rationalization of activities does not result in the transfer of resources away from regional institutions with the centralization of activities on metropolitan campuses and the consequent closure and downgrading of regional universities and TAPE institutes. In our view the final report should reflect

the federal government's stated view that the provision of post secondary education to regional Australia is a national priority.

We are also of the view that the type of demand driven system of higher education outlined in the Discussion Paper does not take proper account of:

- The Federal Government's role to establish, develop and support national priority areas for teaching and research;
- The likely impact on student enrolments at regional campuses if they are not provided the time and resources to restructure existing programs and develop new programs.

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