

4th December, 1997

Roderick West
Chair
Higher Education Review Committee
Location Code 728
GPO Box 9880
CANBERRA ACT 2601

Dear Mr West,

Re: LEARNING FOR LIFE - REVIEW OF HIGHER EDUCATION

There are two issues that I would like to raise in response to the discussion document. One relates to tertiary support programs, the other relates to flexibility of course delivery.

Bankstown Senior College, like many other state high schools in Western Sydney, has a large population of non-English speaking background students. Our student community is for example 97% non-English speaking background. As we are an adult re-entry institution, many of our students have tertiary education qualifications from Europe and South East Asia, but are hindered because they are only in the elementary stages of mastering the English language. For the tertiary sector to reach out to its future clients, it must be prepared to put some "real muscle" into supporting literacy by providing the best possible tertiary English as a Second Language Support Programs.

In relation to flexible course delivery, many schools and TAFES, currently provide courses that begin as early as 7.30am; and our local Bankstown TAFE provides a complete Saturday program for HSC students. Given that many future tertiary students will be holding down Monday to Friday jobs to support their families, universities should consider the viability of an undergraduate Saturday program that will not openly compete with work demands. And in relation to higher ability students, completing final secondary courses in Year 12 or its equivalent, universities should be prepared to enrol via distance education modules, secondary students who are capable of satisfactorily completing a first year tertiary course.

Bankstown Senior College is one of only five senior high schools in NSW; and unique in that it is an adult re-entry campus with a significant non-English speaking student cohort, many of whom are over the age of thirty. I would be delighted to provide a tour of the College and its facilities to any group from your committee. Please do not hesitate to contact me in the future, to arrange such a visit. My direct line is (02) 9707 3178.

Yours sincerely,

Rod Leonard