



Australasian Association for Institutional Research

# Newsletter, Regulation

## July 2013

## President's Update

by Dave Marr

As most of you would know, Jeff Holmes has served AAIR well as its Treasurer since 2008. In 2012 Jeff put up his hand again to continue in that role. However Jeff's role at QUT has changed this year meaning that he can no longer continue as Treasurer although he has agreed to stay on the Committee until this year's AGM. David de Bellis has agreed to stand in as Treasurer until the election of officers in November 2014.

It's hard to express the appreciation I and the Committee have for the excellent work Jeff has done as Treasurer, taking us from a point where our financial processes were in disarray, despite our strong financial position, to a more stable and sound footing. Jeff has agreed to oversee the finalisation and auditing of the 2012/13 financial accounts for AAIR while David will commence looking after the 2013/14 accounts. All the best, Jeff, in your future roles and 'thanks'!

AAIR is embarking on a period of self-promotion. We're currently printing some fridge magnets (see picture of design at above right) for distribution at the AAIR SIG



Forum in August and at the Criterion conference in September. The Committee wanted a catchy by-line to underpin the brand and came up with 'Making Decisions Make Sense'. We'd like members to contact me if you think you can come up with a better by-line to put on future promotional material.

I have mentioned previously that we intend to run a number of surveys of our members this year. You're probably wondering why you haven't received one as yet. We still plan to run a survey regarding the Journal and the Newsletter but we're still deciding on the questions and the format they should take. You will receive the first one shortly hopefully!



### Who Are We?

Back Left to Right: Dean Ward (Honorary Secretary), Don Johnston (Committee Member), Jeff Holmes (Honorary Treasurer), Kathie Rabel (Vice-President). Front Left to Right: Dave Marr (President), Bruce Guthrie (Committee Member), David De Bellis (Committee Member), and Andrea Jeffries (Committee Member).



# Introducing...

## Sharon Kitt

I'm pleased to introduce Sharon Kitt, who among many other things is currently the editor for the AAIR Journal. I have recently been thinking that as part of my editions I should include access to people who are respective experts in relevant fields and after this profile I'm fairly confident you'll agree that Sharon has a wealth of experience and knowledge developed in the research sphere.

Remember, if you know someone inspiring please email me at [editor@air.org.au](mailto:editor@air.org.au) so I can harass them for a profile!



**Sharon Kitt:**  
Interim Director, Research  
Services, University of  
Ballarat

### Name: Sharon Kitt

**Current Position:** interim Director, Research Services, University of Ballarat, and Editor of the [AAIR Journal](#).

### Education:

B Hlth Sci (hons), MIMS, and a PhD is in progress. Sharon expects that many of the future leading jobs in Higher Education will require a PhD. It demonstrates her commitment to attaining a PhD that she's back for her third attempt after numerous life demands held her back from completion earlier.

### Career history:

Sharon started out in a graduate program of the Australian Public Service. From the public service, Sharon then went on to public health research, to central research offices, back to the public health sector, and then on to the university sector. In 2012, Sharon worked as a research fellow at the University of Ballarat, before accepting a secondment to the Director of Research role.

After reading her career path, it will come as a surprise to read that Sharon's research focuses on... research! Research capacity and capability in regional Australia is where you'll find her work.

It appears I have to issue another nerd alert (I know we're all surprised by this), Sharon tells me she LOVES (yes, capitals are required) Bibliometrics. Her next paper, which she is, as I write this, presenting at the

[14<sup>th</sup> International Society of Scientometrics and Informetrics Conference](#), combines bibliometrics and research capacity and capability. Now I'm curious!

### Where do you source information that you need?

"Lately I am finding that subscribing to twitter feeds has created an amazing information and network stream for me." I couldn't agree more, and encourage our readers to take some time to get to know Twitter, you may be surprised. Separate of Twitter, Sharon suggests journal contents alerts, media releases and good old "Googling".

### Any information gathering tips?

"Gather, categorise and never be afraid to jettison information that is at the periphery" wise words from an avid researcher.

"I find everything is interesting, so can be a bit of a 'oh I should read that' hoarder", sounds very familiar!

### What's the future for institutional research?

Sharon sees an expanded and more integrated role for our profession, as long as we don't get caught up as collateral damage in the current [Regulatory Burden review](#).

### What would Sharon do if she were Vice Chancellor?

Sharon says she would "mandate that the use of comic sans font would be grounds for instant dismissal"!

### What's the best thing about AAIR?

"The newsletter (for real!)", and no, I promise I did not pay, or coerce Sharon's response.

### And the AAIR forum?

Diversity and guest plenary speakers.

### What's Sharon's best skill?

The power of observation.

### Joined AAIR: 2008

### What article does Sharon promise me she'll write for a future Newsletter edition?

"How the Journal of Institutional Research needs you."

### What are some of the greatest challenges with any research or publications you have done?

"The two words that strike the biggest fear in my heart are 'networking opportunity'. Developing networks is hard work for me, but they are invaluable once I manage to feel the fear and do it anyway".

### FUN FACTS...

Sharon's worked or studied at every University the fine state of Victoria has to offer, except one! Sounds like a new year's resolution for the future!

You can find Sharon on Twitter @sharonkitt, and while we're on the subject, why not follow AAIR @AAIRaustralasia.

In her next career you'll find Sharon as a full time roller derby skater!

# Higher Education@home

by Emma Liversidge

1. [Students aren't customers... or are they?](#) *The Conversation* article and subsequent reader comments provide a good deal of food (and mirth) for thought, on what students are to the University – student, client, partner, product... the list goes on.
2. The Australian reported the University of Sydney business school as having ["the world's first interactive digital textbook app for an entire course"](#). While the University of Adelaide is issuing iPads as a core learning tool to first-year students enrolled in some science subjects, of which the digital textbooks are free.
3. The new anti-aging serum on the market apparently relates to the University! Ranking guru, and fellow Griffith colleague, Tony Sheil, was in *The Australian* recently, pointing out the [discrepancies of some of the "under 50" institutions](#) being ranked in the *Times Higher Education 100 Under 50 rankings*.
4. After an event held by ACER, AWPA and NCVER, NCVER has released a discussion paper on [performance indicators in the VET sector](#).
5. In an interesting two months since my last edition we've now got a new 'old' Prime Minister after the Labor leadership spill of Julia Gillard for Kevin Rudd. Alongside the spill, a number of ministerial resignations and retirements, and a cabinet reshuffle has seen Minister Kim Carr take on the portfolio of Innovation, Industry, Science, Research and Higher Education.
6. Factional positions have quickly become evident regarding the demand driven system in higher education. While factions may exist, everyone across the sector would see value in a reversal on the Federal Government's plans to cap tax deductions for self-education expenses. Early in July a diverse group of peak bodies joined forces to encourage a decision reversal.
7. Our latest Minister for Higher Education (and a host of other portfolio areas), Kim Carr, has opened the door of communication to Universities on the budget cuts announced by the Gillard government earlier this year. While the net loss to the sector is not expected to

be reduced, Minister Carr does appear to be open to suggestions on where the cuts come from. In fact, Carr seems [open to much wider debate around the higher education system more broadly](#).

8. The landscape continues to be littered with perspectives on the segmentation of academic work with Glenn Withers from ANU suggesting in [The Australian](#), that the business of universities is the link between teaching, research and engagement and warning against further creation of permanent teaching only and research only roles.
9. If you took the time to read (and agree with!) my comments in the March edition, you'll be pleased to note that [Andreas Schliecher, the special adviser on Education policy to the OECD Secretary General](#), promotes the strategy of deploying the very best teachers to the hardest of classrooms and making teaching a high status profession in a bid to improve our performance in literacy and maths tests by 2025.
10. I can't help but feel excitement upon hearing the full year [2012 higher education student statistics](#) have been released. After a quick inspection on the attrition figures, it was interesting to see [The Australian pounce on claims that the demand-driven system is affecting quality](#) by using the national improvements to attrition as a case against said point.
11. Alongside the Higher Education Student figures, NCVER has released its [Students and Courses 2012 report](#), which unfortunately houses some [scary TAFE numbers](#).
12. Leesa Wheelahan, a well-known VET expert, has spoken out about [the marketisation of TAFE's in Australia](#) in the Campus Review. Wheelahan points



out that reducing "all relationships to market signals" writes off the invisible social support that TAFE's provide through access to those disadvantaged, and the provision of skills required for the contemporary high performing workforce.

13. A [Longitudinal Survey of Australian Youth \(LSAY\) report](#) has found that nearly 20% of variation is explained by high school characteristics (for example, sector, gender mix, and academic strength) when determining the probability of a student going on to University.
14. With ambitious government targets on the expansion of education some VET research has examined earnings for those categorised as over-educated, having the right level education, or being under-educated. [While younger people, in comparison to older cohorts, are more likely to be over-educated, the disadvantage is found to be minimal overall](#) as additional study results in skills that are awarded with higher wages.
15. Congratulations to *Graduate Careers Australia* for winning the tender process to run the [2013 UES](#). I am sure many colleagues around Australia will be in support of this announcement after the successful support, coordination and reporting services for the Australian Graduate Survey over the years.
16. News has recently been released that well known leader in Higher Education, Simon Marginson, is set to head to London late this year. Let's hope Marginson will continue to weigh in to the conversation happening in our region.

# Regulation and Quality Assurance

by Emma Liversidge

While the term “regulation” may not bring joy and enthusiasm to most readers, its impact on an institutional researcher’s world is definitely real. For this edition’s topic I wanted to blend both an update of current affairs, with a bit of background for those colleagues not so familiar with the area. I, in no way, espouse to be an expert, far from it in fact, but hopefully this will help. As always, I’m all ears for suggestion on resources in this area – email to [editor@aair.org.au](mailto:editor@aair.org.au).

## UPDATES FOR THE TORTURED SOULS

The Higher Education Standards Panel (HESP) released its [8<sup>th</sup> Communiqué](#) to stakeholders in late May.

Shortly after the Communiqué, the [HESP](#) released its second *Call for Comment* to stakeholders on the [Draft Standards for Research, Research Training and Learning Outcomes \(Research Training\)](#).

May was a month of action, with the announcement by the then Gillard government in to the [‘Assuring quality while reducing the higher education regulatory burden’](#) review. The innovation website advises that the review report prepared by Professor’s Kwong Lee Dow and Valerie Braithwaite will be submitted to the Minister by the end of July 2013. [Terms of reference](#) centered on the national regulator, TEQSA.

Associated with the Regulatory Burden review, Gavin Moodie, Principal Policy Adviser at RMIT published an article in [The Conversation](#) suggesting Universities could minimise their research reporting burden if one university storage bank was used for the reporting to ERA, HERDC and to digital repositories. The article describes challenges as well as potential solutions, for example, the provision of differing levels of security to the public for the access to the publication in comparison to ERA for reporting purposes.

Peak body *Universities Australia* has been campaigning hard this year, and July was no exception with the body suggesting [TEQSA should be stripped of its quality assurance role](#) and remain solely for the purpose of monitoring and ensuring minimum standards.

The *Centre for the Study of Higher Education* released [Tertiary Education Policy in Australia](#) this week, a collection of papers from a variety of authors in the field covering topics across the demand-driven system,

fees and funding, student engagement, assessing outcomes, performance and academic standard, internationalisation and rankings to name a few. While I’ve been careful to avoid the topic of politics in previous versions, I couldn’t help but appreciate this quote from Prof. Simon Marginson, *“The old idea that elections regulate a process of policy compact and electoral accountability seems to have died, replaced by the competitive wisdom that it is a good idea to make yourself into the smallest target possible. This means not talking about real policy until after the election and staying at the safe level of mantras and truisms that are all things to all people.”*

If you’re interested in fact checking statements made in the lead up to the federal election you may want to visit [The Conversation’s Election FactCheck’s](#).

## FAST FACTS FOR THE INNOCENT

I recently fished out a funny clip from the knowledgeable editor of The Australian’s High Wired, Stephen Matchett, which discusses the [disestablishment of AUQA](#) in favour for the then-new TEQSA.

If you want to learn exactly [what TEQSA is mandated to do](#) you can check out their overview of the Agency’s YouTube channel.

In addition you might want to take a look at the [TEQSA glossary](#) which lists the major players and activities recent past and present that are involved in the regulation and quality assurance sphere.

In addition to the above TEQSA resources you might also take a look at the [Higher Education Standards Panel website](#) which houses documentation on the purpose of this advisory body, as well as the useful communiqués which are regularly distributed to stakeholders.

And certainly not last in the beauty pageant is the Australian Qualifications Framework, which has listed a set of written explanations on its website that are intended to assist those using and understanding the AQF. In fact, you can download all explanations in one swoop [here](#).



## Interesting reads

In a special edition of *New Directions for Institutional Research* (NDIR) on [global perspectives of institutional research and planning](#), edited by Angel Calderon (RMIT University) and Karen Webber (The University of Georgia), contemporary thinking and practices of institutional research and planning from around the world are discussed. Key issues such as access, institutional accountability, globalisation and marketisation of education, quality assurance, and educational policy priorities as well as the development of national and multinational higher education data systems (including benchmarking and rankings) are covered throughout this volume.

## POSITIONS VACANT



Seeking another opportunity in Institutional Research? Try our [Opportunities](#) webpage for current vacancies in the profession

## Looking for some training and development?

See our [Training and Development](#) webpage focused on training for institutional researchers.

## 51% Satisfaction

is reported by international students in Higher Education on living and accommodation costs according to the [2012 International Student Survey](#).

# Higher Education Abroad

by Emma Liversidge

1. No doubt there are pockets of innovative teaching occurring around the world, though sometimes it's hard to get your hands on examples. If you're interested in innovative teaching try this Chronicle of Higher Education article on [the use of different technologies and social media to engage at risk students in the US](#).
2. The US based EDUCAUSE, [Top 10 IT issues, 2013](#) fit surprisingly well with our own regions focus at the moment. Some of the top 10 include: improving student outcomes through technology; fitting organisational models to facilitate openness and agility; understanding and balancing security and openness; determining and implementing sustainable online strategies; and, drum roll please, using analytics to support critical institutional outcomes.
3. Looking to tame the big data beast? Consider reading *Big Data Governance* by Sunil Soares, recommended by Marian Cook in a [Computerworld article](#) applying some reality checks to the Big Data spectacular.
4. MOOC and drama seem to go hand in hand, and that is what David Glance, from the University of Western Australia, capitalises on in an article on [MOOC related fear](#). As part of this article, Glance mentions the [Avalanche report](#) produced by the *Institute for Public Policy Research*. If you watch the Higher Ed space for even just a short while you're bound to stumble across some hilarity in opinion pieces and this report has certainly gained some of those with pearls published in [Wonkhe](#) and the [Higher Education Strategy Associates](#).
5. It appears Georgia Institute of Technology has acted on discourse on the ability for institutions to offer low-cost online education when it signed on to work with Udacity to offer an [Online Master of Science in Computer Science](#).
6. [International students are a key source of talent for US employers, and numbers for US graduate school programs](#) according to a report released by the National Foundation for American Policy.
7. Think Higher Education is lacking a bit of academic innovation but uncertain where to look for good examples? Hanover Research has recently released ["Institutionalizing Innovation in Higher Education"](#)
8. The Chronicle of Higher Education published a guest post which is worth a read. Farouk El-Baz discusses some of [the challenges faced in Egypt](#) recently and includes some frightening statistics in comparison to our region – 77.5% of people aged 15 to 29 are unemployed. Here the author explains that young people desire and the country would greatly benefit from developing their Higher Education sector to reverse much of the disadvantage occurring in Egypt. Let's wait and hope for improved outcomes for the country.
9. The Chronicle of HE also released a suite of articles around [The Gates Foundation influence on Higher Education policy](#) with controversy abound from remediation supporters.
10. "The UK Professional Standards Framework for teaching and supporting learning (UKPSF) provides a means to comprehensively benchmark, develop, recognise and reward teaching and learning support roles in higher education". If you're interested in frameworks you may want to take a look at the report [measuring the impact of the UKPSF](#) by the *Higher Education Academy* who has continued to develop the framework had reports positive news overall.
11. A plan to build a [huge university hub](#) in the city of Domodedovo is being considered by the Russian government. Commentators have said the goal relates more to a desire to clear prestigious
12. Moscow districts for offices and commercial buildings.
13. Some ranking fun has been aired with claims that [re-analyses of ranking systems data reveal discrepancies](#).
14. In my two earlier editions I mentioned some US based initiatives helping students find funds to study. I was pleased to stumble across Australian based [Pozible](#), which is a "crowdfunding platform and community-building tool for creative projects and ideas". While not designed for funding students to study, the concept of community generated funding and entrepreneurship appealed.
15. In a bid to protect "the collective student interest" the Higher Education Funding Council for England (HEFCE) is set to gain more powers in the Government's attempt to reform Higher Education. As a lead actor the [HEFCE will identify and address issues for remedial action through the collaboration with stakeholders including students](#) and their interests in areas like the provision of information, complaint handling processes and providing prospective students fair chances of gaining a place.
16. The [2013 New Zealand Tertiary Teaching Excellence Awards](#) were celebrated in early July. Congratulations go to Professor Gordon Sanderson, a leading Ophthalmologist from the University of Otago, who is described by students and colleagues as inspirational.

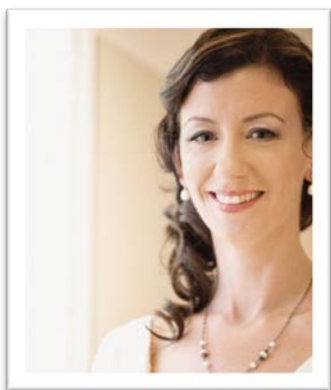


By the time I get to this point in the Newsletter I usually don't want to say too much, but this time I would like to encourage you to consider participating in Twitter more (if you don't already do so). Not normally a fan of social networks, it wasn't until I started looking at the AAIR Twitter account that I realised the wealth of information being published and the networks that are available through this service. And while I'm at it I want to encourage you to follow us on Twitter: [@AAIRaustralia](https://twitter.com/AAIRaustralia). In the coming months I will focus on sharing information on a more regular basis through this medium.

I also wanted to promote the executive development short course listed below.

Well that's it from me this edition. Until next time!

Emma  
AAIR eNewsletter Editor



### Visual Business Intelligence for Enlightening Analysis and Communication

Wed 20 Nov - Fri 22 Nov  
Victoria University of Wellington, Wellington, NZ

Presenter: [Stephen Few](#)  
Full fee: NZ\$2,995.00 (plus 15%GST)  
Early Bird and Group discounts - contact [profdev@vuw.ac.nz](mailto:profdev@vuw.ac.nz)  
[Click here for full course outline](#) and Registration.

We are overwhelmed by information, not because there is too much, but because we don't know how to tame it. Information lies stagnant in rapidly expanding pools as our ability to collect and warehouse it increases, but our ability to make sense of and communicate it remains inert, largely without notice. Computers speed the process of information handling, but they don't tell us what the information means or how to

communicate its meaning to decision makers. These skills are not intuitive; they rely largely on analysis and presentation skills that must be learned.

Stephen Few of Perceptual Edge focuses on the tools and techniques of visual business intelligence to help you make better use of your valuable information assets.

This is a three-day programme consisting of three courses: Show Me the Numbers: Table and Graph Design; Information Dashboard Design for At-A-Glance Monitoring; and Now You See It: Visual Data Exploration and Analysis.

This course is aimed at managers and business analysts, planners, information management and communication professionals, business intelligence developers, application developers, data analysts, usability experts - basically anyone who needs to process and communicate quantitative information.

For more information contact [profdev@vuw.ac.nz](mailto:profdev@vuw.ac.nz) or visit [www.victoria.ac.nz/profdev](http://www.victoria.ac.nz/profdev) (under International Expert Classes)