



AAIR Newsletter May 2024



Photo by Andrew Bradshaw: Spit Bridge to Manly Walk, Sydney Harbour

Latest Musings From
The President
PAGE 2

AAIR Events
Register for our upcoming events!
PAGE 3

Institutional Researcher's
Corner Interview
Five quick questions with Pallavi
Khanna
PAGE 4

CONTENT

[From the President](#)

[Editorial](#)

[AAIR News](#)

[Upcoming AAIR events](#)

[Institutional researcher's corner:](#)

[Pallavi Khanna](#)

[AAIR member contributions](#)

[CAUDIT Updates](#)

[Connections](#)

[Sector News and Views](#)

[Big Data, Data Analytics, Business Intelligence](#)

[Reports and Resources](#)

[HE Conferences and Events](#)

[Training and Development](#)

[Other Events](#)

[On the Move](#)

[Positions Vacant](#)

[Call for Contributions](#)

[Disclaimer](#)

FROM THE PRESIDENT

Hello everyone

As I advance towards finalising the draft of my Doctor of Professional Practice, I am continually reminded of the crucial role leadership plays within higher education. Throughout my career, I have encountered a diverse array of leaders and leadership styles, from the inspiring and charismatic, to the micromanaging and narcissistic.

Some of you may have also experienced leaders who seem absent—those who hesitate to take on the mantle of leadership, struggling to provide direction or support as they focus solely on their own responsibilities. We each have our unique methods of interacting with these different types of leaders. Charismatic leaders, who set high standards and encourage us to meet them, offer memorable and inspiring experiences. Conversely, the stress and frustration elicited by dealing with narcissistic or micromanaging leaders can have a lasting impact on how we view ourselves and our work.

The significance of leadership is a topic frequently debated and discussed in various forums, from office conversations to academic journals, and across countless articles on platforms like LinkedIn. In my observations of leadership training, there often appears to be only a perfunctory emphasis on how to effectively cheerlead or nurture a team. These skills do not always come naturally, and there is a complexity in balancing nurturing with leadership without overstepping. Reflecting on these various styles and their impacts underscores that effective leadership transcends more than style adoption. It's about understanding and responding to the needs of your team, and adapting leadership to create an environment in which everyone can flourish. True leadership in higher education requires a delicate balance between providing guidance and granting autonomy, enabling professional staff to harness their capabilities while ensuring they receive the support necessary to excel. It means being proactive and visible, yet also knowing when to step back and allow others to lead. The most effective leaders inspire and motivate not through fear or authority, but through fostering an atmosphere of encouragement, respect, and recognition of each individual's contributions.

The most effective leaders inspire and motivate not through fear or authority, but through fostering an atmosphere of encouragement, respect, and recognition of each individual's contributions.

Leadership is not always the central focus for us as an association, as traditionally our focus has been about supporting you to be institutional research knowledge leaders within your institution. I think it is now time to broaden our attention to being not only supporting your institutional research practice, but to also support institutional research leadership.

Recently, I was encouraged by a new learning module on the [Association for Institutional Research website](#) about Leading with Evidence, Analytics, and Data. I thought more about that and wondered, 'how do we grow and support our members who are leaders?', and 'how do we grow and support institutional research professionals to be able to step up as leaders?'

Let us aim to be leaders who not only drive institutional success, but who also foster an environment conducive to growth and innovation for ourselves and our colleagues.

Noho ora mai (stay well – goodbye)

Stuart Terry, AAIR President



EDITORIAL

Dear newsletter readers

A few weekends ago, I enjoyed a beautiful bushwalk from the Spit Bridge to Manly along the beautiful Sydney Harbour. This is probably the fifth time I have enjoyed this walk, and the amount of people along the pathway was amazing. What a great time of the year to be enjoying the outdoors and some of the wildlife along the way.

It's that time once again for the Australian federal Budget, which is always held on the second Tuesday in May. Already, the Australian Government is dropping hints on some of the policies to be included in the Budget. One of those that may affect higher education is the possible changes to HELP indexation, from the current Consumer Price Index to the lower amount of either Consumer Price Index or the Wage Price Index. This change will take effect from 1 June 2023, subject to the passage of legislation. It looks like some interesting times ahead! It is estimated that the new indexation rate will be 4.7%, compared to last year's indexation rate of 7%.

Andrew Bradshaw
Editor, The Institutional
Researcher

AAIR NEWS

Upcoming AAIR events



BUSINESS INTELLIGENCE & ANALYTICS SIG CONVAAIRSATION 1/2024

28 May 2024
12–1pm AEST / 2–3pm NZST
Online

Hosted by AAIR, convened by:
Lester DSouza, AAIR Business Intelligence & Analytics SIG Chair

Ever feel like your data holds the key to unlocking a brighter future for your institution, but you just can't quite crack the code? Imagine a world where uncovering hidden insights and generating impactful reports becomes effortless. A world where a powerful new tool joins your analytical arsenal, supercharging your workflow and leaving spreadsheets in the dust. (This is written by Gemini, ha ha!)

This next AAIR BI and Analytics SIG *lunch and learn* will delve into the fascinating realm of Large Language Models (LLMs) and witness how they can revolutionise your approach to business intelligence and analytics at Australian universities.

We'll showcase how LLMs can:

- Unleash hidden insights from your data with unprecedented speed and accuracy.
- Create reports and narratives that resonate with stakeholders across campuses.
- Automate tedious tasks and free up your time for strategic thinking and longer lunch breaks.

Get ready to witness the future of analytics unfold.

Pricing:

- Members: FREE
- Non-members: \$52.77 (AUD\$45 + GST and booking fee)

REGISTER

Fresh AAIR Networking



FRESH AAIR – NEWBIES NETWORKING (JUNE 2024)

18 June 2024
12–1pm AEST / 2–3pm NZST
Online

Hosted by AAIR, convened by:

- **Andrew Bradshaw**, AAIR Executive Committee Member
- **Pallavi Khanna**, AAIR Executive Committee Member
- **Liesha Northover**, AAIR Executive Officer

AAIR would like to welcome and get to know our new members and reconnect with returning members.

This casual virtual get-together is an opportunity to learn more about AAIR and to introduce you to our website and events.

It's a great chance for us to all say 'hi' and have a chat about ourselves and our roles, and meet other AAIR members.

This event is open to new, returning, and current members who are seeking to broaden their peer network and get more information about the services that AAIR offers to members. Grab a coffee and come along to meet colleagues and make new friends. Non-members are also welcome.

Pricing:

- Members: FREE
- Non-members: Also FREE 😊

REGISTER

To see more AAIR events, please visit our events page at <https://aaair.org.au/event-location/aaair/>.



Institutional researcher's corner

Five quick questions with Pallavi Khanna, National Manager, Data Excellence

What is your job title?

National Manager, Data Excellence at the Australian Catholic University.



Briefly, how would you describe your role in your institution?

I am new to the Australian Catholic University (ACU) and am responsible for ACU's data and information strategy and governance, and also for ensuring that the data is effectively utilised as an asset.

I oversee the data warehousing and business intelligence functions at ACU, our analytics and insights, and our central reporting capability. I am also actively involved in functions such as enrolment planning, and in pilot projects on AI.

From your perspective, what will be the key skills, capabilities, and knowledge required for institutional research moving forward?

While data analysis skills are crucial to our roles, skills in drawing out insights from complex data—and being able to tell 'stories' using the analysis—are becoming more and more important. Often the best analysis still needs us to communicate the story in a compelling manner so as to inspire action. Many excellent analyses result in no action if missing the right narrative, context, and insight, and so I believe that as

institutional researchers these skills are essential for us moving forward.

In addition, stakeholder relationships are critical to our roles. Without the right sponsor advocating for us, even the best analyses will likely go unnoticed.

Communication skills and stakeholder management skills are important areas we should prioritise as institutional researchers.

What do you believe will be the future priorities or the emerging areas of interest for institutional research?

With the demand for data and data-enabled decisions continuing to grow at our universities, there are many opportunities for us as institutional researchers. The role of data in AI will be an area of focus, as there is increased recognition that good quality data is essential for AI application. At the same time, the governance, controls, and protection of our data will be just as important going forward, to ensure we have agreed standards in place for the use of our data, and that personal and sensitive data is protected and secured. Universities are data rich and the opportunities to analyse and leverage insights from that data as a point of differentiation are also growing. The future for us as institutional researchers looks exciting!

Complete this statement: In my role, I can't operate effectively without ...

... my colleagues, my team members, and my stakeholders. They inspire, challenge, question and collaborate, and make every day interesting and rewarding!

Connect with Pallavi



AAIR member contributions

Transforming Education with AI-Driven Insights and Student Feedback

By Cassandra Saunders



Explorance, in partnership with the University of New South Wales, co-hosted the annual Explorance Bluenotes conference APAC 2024 on 13 and 14 May in Sydney. The theme for this year's conference was 'Transforming Education with AI-Driven Insights and Student Feedback', which was certainly timely given the remarkable and rapid evolution of AI that is transforming how we work, and interact, with technology. The two-day conference was attended by 70 delegates from across Australia, Singapore, and Malaysia, looking forward to an opportunity to connect and share experiences around student feedback and explore innovative feedback analytics solutions.



The conference kicked off on day one with a keynote address from Professor Alex Steel from the University of New South Wales, who discussed the importance of understanding AI—what it does and how it works—before we can use it effectively. This was followed by an engaging panel discussion focusing on unlocking the power of open-ended student feedback to enhance the teaching and learning experience from panellists Professor Lynn Gribble (University of New South Wales), Ms Emma Dawes (University of Newcastle) and Ms Jacqueline Tan (Singapore University of Social Sciences). Topics included:

- the historical significance of open-ended feedback
- the role of AI in feedback
- ensuring ethical and fair analysis
- fostering actionable outcomes.



The second half of the day consisted of a series of engaging and informative presentations from delegates who are undertaking innovative work focused on the utilisation of AI in the student feedback process, which generated active discussion amongst attendees. Topics included harnessing early-semester student feedback and AI for educational enhancement, and practical uses of AI for institutional reporting.

Day one ended with dinner at the Coogee Bay Hotel, which provided a wonderful opportunity for conference attendees to socialise and network over drinks, delicious food, and a gorgeous view overlooking Coogee Beach.

Dr May Lim opened day 2 with a keynote presentation on the utilisation of generative AI tools to provide insightful and timely feedback across written, oral, and project-based assessment tasks in engineering education. This was followed by more opportunities for individual institutions to share how they are currently using AI to enhance learning and teaching experiences, make better use of qualitative feedback with [MLY](#) by Explorance and close the feedback loop.

Day 2 also saw an opportunity for delegates to come together in small groups for roundtable discussions on a range of topics:

- experiences and best practices for increasing response rates
- data-driven decision-making to transform the student experience
- quality and accuracy of source systems
- developing a feedback culture
- diving deeper into feedback with AI – practices and policies.

A huge thank you to both Explorance and the University of New South Wales for hosting such an experience-rich event, and thank you to all of the presenters who shared their innovative work in such an engaging and informative way.



Photo by Andrew Bradshaw: Sydney Harbour National Park, Sydney Harbour

Apply now for 2025 Scholarships and Grants at the National Library of Australia

National Library of Australia Scholarships

- For Australian PhD candidates
- 9 x \$6,000 Scholarships
- 6-week residency at the National Library in Canberra
- Two scholarships specifically for Australian First Nations scholars

Specialty scholarships available in the fields of:

- Asian studies
- Maps
- Biography
- Australia and the Pacific in the 18th to 20th centuries

Asia Study Grants

- For academics and PhD candidates residing in Australia
- 5 x \$5,000 Grants
- 4-week residency at the National Library in Canberra
- For research in the National Library of Australia's Asian language and Asia-related collections.

For more information visit www.nla.gov.au Applications close 24 June 2024.



Women's Leadership Scholarships

Available Now: Partial scholarships for women in the Education, Training and Development Sector ranging from \$1,000

to \$5,000 per person, for one of four leadership and workplace skill development programs.

These scholarships are aimed at encouraging more women to increase their impact at work, progress their career, and step into leadership roles.

Registrations of interest close on Friday 14 June 2024. Via our website: <https://www.wla.edu.au/industry/education/>



Got something you'd like to share in this section? Email our newsletter editor.

CONTRIBUTE

CAUDIT UPDATES

April 2024 Updates

2024 CAUDIT Autumn Members' Meeting – Leading Towards Success

The 2024 CAUDIT Autumn Members' Meeting will be held on the 26-28 May 2024 in Hobart, Tasmania.

The CAUDIT Members' Meeting provides a closed-door platform for CIOs/CDOs and IT Directors from Member Institutions to exchange ideas, explore the latest trends in the industry and collaborate on shared challenges and areas of mutual interest.

The AMM will be delivered with the support of our sponsors Anthology, CISCO, Compnow, Google Cloud, Juniper Networks, Palo Alto Networks and Salesforce. [Learn more here.](#)

Join us at the CAUDIT Communities Conference

For the first time ever, we're creating an opportunity for all Communities of Practice to come together in one space! The [CAUDIT Communities Conference](#) will be hosted at La Trobe campus from 24-26 July 2024. The Conference will be a groundbreaking opportunity to foster collaboration across the various IT functions within your university, and demonstrate the power of a strong sector!



Elevating Hybrid Work and Learning in Higher Education: Blueprint for Chief Information Officers

To navigate a digital-first world in higher education, the integration of technologies in learning environments and meeting spaces has become a critical focus. CIOs are often faced with the cumbersome task of managing multiple, disparate devices and systems across their campuses. In our latest report, we explore the challenge of creating a unified ecosystem; from collaboration platforms to audio-visual equipment, environmental sensors, and teaching tools, that supports seamless interoperability and enhances the educational experience. Read the full article and access the report [here](#).

CEO Update

In March I had the pleasure of connecting with colleagues from Europe, Canada, South Africa, UK and US in person at the UCISA Leadership Conference in the beautiful but freezing Edinburgh. Edinburgh, with a rich history of education dating back to the Middle Ages, was an ideal setting for exploring the opportunities and challenges facing the higher education sector.

Embracing the value of international collaboration emerged as a key theme for March and is something we have increasingly focused on at CAUDIT over the last few months.

The [Higher Education Reference Models](#) (HERM) are the most obvious testament to the value of International collaboration, and HERM Version 3 was released at the UCISA Leadership Conference. The HERM has now been translated into eight languages and downloaded by over 1,000 universities globally. The ongoing evolution and enrichment of the Higher Education Reference Models is made possible through the warm global collaboration between the CAUDIT HERM Working Group, our colleagues in the United Kingdom through UCISA, other European colleagues through EUNIS, and our North American colleagues through EDUCAUSE.

In exploring the opportunities to expand on our strong history of international collaboration, key areas quickly emerged including vendors and technology, cybersecurity and leadership training. As EDUCAUSE's Strategic Priorities identified 'successfully overcoming challenges related to higher education technology is inextricably linked to

positive and collaborative relationships between institutions and private industry partners.'

While there may be nuances when collaborating internationally, the challenges and opportunities we face working in Higher Education IT across the globe are consistent. Bringing together our collective resources, experience, and skills can only lead to positive outcomes for the entire sector.

[Our recent partnership](#) with Toronto Metropolitan University (TMU) and CUCCIO on the third-party risk and cybersecurity benchmarking collaboration is part of our ongoing efforts to work with international colleagues to deliver value to the sector. The Higher Education Community Vendor Assessment (HECVAT) is another example, which was developed by the Higher Education Information Security Council ([HEISC](#)) Shared Assessments Working Group, in collaboration with [Internet2](#) and [REN-ISAC](#). This is now utilised extensively by institutions globally and provides another opportunity to collaborate, increasing the quality and quantity of information collected to provide even more value to our members.

I am extremely grateful to work in a sector that is underpinned by a strong commitment to collaboration. I thank our host UCISA for facilitating the recent connection, the UCISA Members for being so welcoming and open, and our international colleagues for an immensely valuable week.

Greg Sawyer
CEO

May 2024 Updates

Applications are now open for the CAUDIT Leadership Institute

Calling IT, library and eResearch professionals from CAUDIT and CAUL Member Institutions! The CAUDIT Leadership Institute has a strong track record of equipping emerging leaders across Higher Education in Australia and New Zealand with exemplary [leadership skills and abilities](#). The 2024 program will be held from Monday 19 – Friday 23 August 2024 on the Gold Coast.

Apply for the 2024 CAUDIT Awards

If you've been involved in applying digital capabilities to positively transform the experience of students, academics, and professional staff at your institution, we want to hear from you. The [2024 Award](#)

[categories](#) are Enhancing the Student Experience, Excellence in Research Support, Operational Excellence and Emerging Leader. Applications close on 28 June 2024.

Join us in Hobart on 26-28 May for the Autumn Members' Meeting

The 2024 CAUDIT Autumn Members' Meeting's (AMM) insightful two-day program will feature topical presentations from your colleagues, thought leaders and sector-specific organisations including AARNet. The theme of the AMM is [Leading towards Success](#).

Explore the CAUDIT Communities Conference Program

CONNECTIONS

[LinkedIn connections](#)

Many of you will remember Andrew Norton (Prof in the Practice of Higher Education Policy at ANU), for his keynote in 2022, and other occasions. He has a very useful LinkedIn page where you can find lots of updates and opinions on the ACCORD.



Mark Atkins and Terry Smith are the joint Authors of Data Governance Needs Risk Management. If your organisation is struggling with information quality and data definitions, Mark's LinkedIn page is below.



SECTOR NEWS AND VIEWS

(Note: Future Campus dates are indicative of publication and may differ from their website)

The Federal Government, excellent independent David Pocock and Greens have combined in the Senate to create a Select Committee, 'to inquire into and report on the opportunities and impacts for Australia arising out of the uptake of AI technologies.' The brief does not explicitly include research, education and training but is broad enough to allow for submissions by the usual lobbies. (Future Campus – 5 April)



The Australian Skills Quality Authority has had a win in court against 'an entity' that advertised VET courses through recognition of prior learning without identifying a registered training organisation that would issue a statement of attainment. The authority continues to investigate the organisation, now trading as ASQANET – which seems a sure way to encourage the regulator's attention. (Future Campus – 5 April)

The Parliamentary Joint Committee on Intelligence and Security has reviewed the Foreign Influence Transparency Scheme Act (2018) – its recommendations include a win for universities. The Act requires any person 'or entity' that 'engages with the Australian political landscape on behalf of a foreign state or principal' to register. A 'transparency notice' under the Act has only applied to a university once and then not for long – the University of Sydney Confucius Institute was assessed as a foreign government related entity for a month in 2021 before governance changes got it off the hook. But universities and lobby groups submitted to the Committee that definitions in the Act are 'vague and confusing' and bring a compliance burden. While the committee does not propose handing over HE issues under the Act to the Universities Foreign Interference Taskforce, it does recommend that after any amendments to the Act, 'university and HE stakeholders' meet with government to find ways 'to ease the regulatory burden' in complying. (Future Campus – 5 April)

Charles Darwin U's march towards a Northern Territory med school diverts attention from the existing medical training program there. That is run by Flinders U, which has largely kept quiet about CDU's methodical campaign to pinch its patch. But former CDU staffer Don Fuller, who worked on creating the Flinders program there, has come out against a local med school, suggesting there is no room for two in the Territory. 'Given the presence of a high quality and highly performing medical school already in position, a more difficult and doomed project cannot be imagined,' he writes in local NT media. Unless of course CDU VC Scott Bowman thinks his proposed med school should replace Flinders' NT presence. (Future Campus – 5 April)

[Murdoch U announces a new allowance for Indigenous staff to compensate for 'cultural load,'](#) the 'often unseen' work they do, beyond the scope of their employment, to 'provide cultural education and guidance to non-

Indigenous colleagues, Murdoch claims the allowance, up to \$8,900, is a university system first. (Sharlene Leroy-Dyer sets out Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander employment provisions in university enterprise agreements. (Future Campus – 5 April)

Punishment Focus Ineffective to Stop Cheating by Stephen Matchett. Student cheating is always with us – as are university responses, using either adversarial (assessment security) or cooperative (awareness and honour codes) approaches. Cath Ellis (Uni Sydney) and Kane Murdoch (Macquarie U) suggest using both. 'The challenge that remains,' they argue in a new paper 'is how to get the balance right.' 'Higher education institutions need to know when to use which approach and with whom.' The researchers propose that the best way to address cheating is to use 'responsive regulation' a concept developed in the 1990s, which they argue provides a useful approach to enforcement of assessment security, but doesn't prescribe when to punish vs when to persuade. Ellis and Murdoch create a pyramid model to resolve that issue, with a hierarchy of escalating responses to cheating, matched to levels of student 'willingness and ability to do the work of learning.' At the base are those who are and will. Higher up are others who at various times and in various ways can't and at the top others who won't. The task is to calibrate penalties so that students at the apex of evil (sorry) respond by moving to the lower levels. 'Ultimately, the problem higher education institutions have in challenging cheating is a direct result of not generating enough downward pressure. As a result, many higher education institutions probably have a pyramid with an ever-widening bulge heading further and further up whether they know about it or not,' they write. (Future Campus – 8 April)

Occasional Clouds in Sunshine State Reports by Stephen Matchett. Uni Queensland had a good 2023, way better than 2022. The \$123m operating result for the university's consolidated account, compares to 2022, when investments went backwards by \$220m, a major contributor to a \$310m loss. However, the university has had three flat revenue years from enrolments – with more to come as slow student starts flow through the system. Overall numbers (55,400) last year were down on 2020. And while internationals have bounced around in a 2,000 range, last year's 16,909 was down on the 2021 peak of 17,026. But while the major revenue streams stayed the same,

the current of staff costs was strong. Academic FTE was stable last year, at 2,988 but professional numbers were up from 4,000 in 2021 to 4,500 last year. Total employee expenses for the consolidated university were up 6 per cent, to \$1.332bn. James Cook U chancellor Ngaire Brown says financially the university has 'had to proceed with some caution.' It shows in the annual report. The consolidated result last year was a \$39m loss, on consolidated income of \$616m – compared to nearly \$50m, on revenue of \$529m in 2022. However, \$22m of last year's loss was due to the Australian Taxation Office rejecting a franking credit refund of \$22.8m on the dividend to the university from the share of the sale of Education Australia. Just about every public university was clobbered by the ATO over this and many listed the loss in '22 reports however JCU has lodged an objection. 'Navigating the reduction in staffing has been challenging for all, but we are now closer to a sustainable staffing level for the size and scale of our business,' VC Simon Biggs states. JCU reports staff spending for 2023 at just under half total outlays. JCU only reports student numbers (heads: 21,207, EFT's: 15,147) for '23 but evidently there are aspiration for growth. According to Professor Briggs, 'curricula renewal and marketing improvements' are 'expected to enhance the effectiveness of our approach.' There's bad news and good news in Griffith U's annual report. Despite the net operating loss of \$66.7m, the university reports that it remains financially stable. It follows a \$69.7m loss in 2022. A substantial swag of last year's result is due to a \$65m increase in employee expenses. It is due, the annual report explains, 'to a range of factors, including higher staff numbers, enterprise bargaining increases and higher oncosts.' Griffith U went backwards on enrolments last year, with 30,900 bachelor degree students, down from 33,500 in 2022 and 36,600 in 2021. (Future Campus – 8 April)

Last June, Australians with a HELP debt were slugged with a hefty 7.1% increase on their loans. This came as a very unwelcome surprise to many students and graduates with debts. While student loans do not attract interest, they are indexed to inflation. This is a bit of a non-event when inflation is low. But times have changed. Now students and graduates are anxiously waiting to see what will happen on the next indexation date on June 1. As higher education expert [Andrew Norton](#) notes, the indexation of student debt is 'arguably the federal government's biggest political



problem when it comes to universities'. The government is currently considering a recommendation from the Universities Accord final report to try and make indexation fairer. It proposes setting indexation at the lower of the Consumer Price Index (which measures inflation) or the Wage Price Index (which measures wage increases). But Norton says the government should be looking at another option. As he explains: 'While the WPI would have lowered indexation in recent years, in most years it is higher than CPI. This means students would not necessarily be better off.' Instead, Norton suggests indexation should be the lower of the CPI or a fixed maximum rate of 4%. '[This] would better protect HELP borrowers against unpredictable increases in their student debt.' (The Conversation – 8 April)

Digital Upskilling Required for Nurse Academics by Tim Winkler. A survey of 119 nursing academics across Australia found that digital health literacy was patchy and significant upskilling is required. The outcomes of the research, documented in a new paper by researchers from Charles Sturt University and RMIT, found 'There is a significant gap in nursing academics' knowledge and confidence to teach digital health theory and its application in nursing.' Only 6% of respondents had received any formal training in digital health, and the approach to teaching and assessing the topic varied considerably across institutions. The researchers found that more experienced academics tended to be more confident about teaching digital health, but that considerable training was required to ensure graduates could be equipped with the appropriate capabilities required to nurse in health systems of the future. (Future Campus 10 April)

All OK in WA for as Long as International Enrolments Stay Strong. Annual reports from the state's public universities demonstrate business as usual at UWA, while Edith Cowan U is looking good, and Curtin U is big, really big. Curtin U's platitude-rich Annual Report reveals an institution of financial substance and plenty of it. Student headcount (61,000) is up on every year since 2019. In-country internationals are 8,500; 1,500 higher than 2019 and while the off-shore market is down 600 at 6,200 Curtin U has clearly maintained a balanced export business. With staff numbers stable, the University appears set to manage growth, apart that is, from making a \$12.9m loss on \$1.097bn in revenue in 2023 compared to a \$36m loss

on \$950m in 2022. All up, Edith Cowan U had a good year, with income up nearly \$200m on the previous year. This is largely due to a near \$70m turn around on investments, to \$62m; as well as \$80m more in fees and charges, probably due to a 'surge in post-pandemic demand' from international students. All up the university had a net result of \$189m, up \$150m on '22. But it's all business as usual only until the university's big bet on its move to the CBD pays off, or does not. Project cost is \$844m, of which \$228m is already incurred. Student enrolments at UWA were stable in 2023. CSP enrolments were down 3 per cent on the Covid years and in-line with 2019 at 13 400. While onshore international were 26 per cent up it was on a low base, to 5 300 in '23. Overall, the UWA group jogged along ok, with total revenue of \$1.12bn compared to \$1.071bn in '22. Much of the increase was due to a \$44m increase in fees and charges, presumably much of which flows from the improvement in international student income. Despite increased operating costs, total expenses were marginally lower, due to no repeat of the \$100m investment loss in 2022. Overall UWA had a positive net result of \$90m, up nearly \$70m in 2022. Murdoch U is looking better than once was, with a net result of \$5.6m, an improvement of \$42m on its 2022 loss, But the surplus was not much of a return on total income on \$472m. Fees and charges are a big part of the positive result, \$83m up on the previous year. Goodish results all over – at least for as long as international enrolments stay strong. Previous premier Mark McGowan's interest in merging public universities appears not to be shared by successor Roger Cook, but if the subject does come up, Curtin U looks like best suited to subsume one of the smaller ones and Edith Cowan is doing ok flying solo. (Future Campus – 10 April)

More Research Needed on Research Funding by Stephen Matchett. 'If peer review were a drug, it wouldn't be allowed on the market because it has not been rigorously tested,' authors including Adrian Barnett from QUT argue, in a new paper on research funding models.

The researchers critique various ways money is handed out and propose research topics on ways to decide who gets what. 'We can think of no other industry that spends so little on evidence-based quality control and process improvement,' they write.

And so, they propose:

- Reporting data on program success rates, including amounts distributed and the applicant pool.
- Results on the reliability of funding decisions, notably across disciplines with awareness of the 'gameability' of indicators.
- Alternative evaluation, this could include merit indicators in bibliometric data and citation counts, which would 'democratise the evaluation process, ensuring that the direction of science is not dictated solely by a selected few.'
- Alternative distribution. For example, granting organisations set themes and researchers apply or lotteries of peer-reviewed applicants.
- Data on the cost of competition for grants by different disciplines and for applied and basic research.
- Assessing 'epistemological costs' in variously funding 'risky research,' 'normal science and supporting 'proliferation and variety.'
- Considering social costs, 'there is little research on the social costs incurred by individuals who miss out on grant competitions.'

The authors suggest 'greater funding dispersal is likely to be beneficial' – but don't know what distribution system would be best, making a strong case for where further research on research is needed. (Future Campus – 10 April)



[Australia's Ranking Success Reflects Past Glory](#) by Angel Calderon, RMIT University.

top 10. This year, Melbourne Uni has the highest number of total subject listings, increasing by five to 53, edging ahead of Sydney Uni with 52 listings and the Queensland Uni with 50 listings. Go8 universities continue to have the highest number of total listings. Outside the Go8, UTS increased by seven to 34 listings, followed by Macquarie with 32 listings, Curtin and QUT have 31 listings each. Wollongong, Griffith, Newcastle, La Trobe, Deakin and RMIT have between 25 to 30 listings each.

Food for thought

The top five universities are separated from other large universities, which do not possess the same amount of financial resources to increase rapidly in global rankings.

We are seeing a three-tiered system of Australia's public universities: those with



enough financial resources, which will continue to shine in global rankings; mid-tier universities, which must be astute in their investment choices to remain relevant and competitive, and a group of universities with limited resources. Due to their size and focus, the latter are unlikely to feature prominently in global rankings.

Success reflects past glory

Australia's continued success in global rankings continue to reflect the years when universities' finances were stronger.

Australian universities are yet to fully feel the impact of the challenging circumstances experienced over the past five years. The release of QS rankings by subject, highlight the importance of the scope of the Australian government's investment in universities. The Government's response to the Higher Education Accord review will be fundamental in shaping Australian universities on the global stage. It is also necessary for our university leaders to ensure that institutional efforts are consistent with existing resources, are aligned to mission and fulfill Australian societal needs. Recently, I wrote that sooner or later university leaders will have to figure out what the right size and shape of institutions is to make ends meet. (Future Campus 12 April)



In news that will surprise no-one in international student recruitment, the Australian Government's new ranking of institutions by the risk of their students breaching visa conditions is being used in agent marketing. What is surprising, is that it appears to have taken this long – the ratings were visible in December. This will undoubtedly add to university ire over the delays in visa issue and what appears to some as capricious decisions by officials. They should shut up, lest it encourage the government to go harder. Fewer students with a high-risk of visa breaches may be the policy goal, but the political intent is demonstrating the government is reducing international arrivals who will compete for accommodation in tight rental markets. (Future Campus – 12 April)

Back in 2020 two academic casuals in Uni Melbourne's Graduate School of Education complained they were required to work more hours than the number in their contract and their supervisor replied if they claimed for the

extra they should not expect work the next year – which was what happened to one of them. The Fair Work Ombudsman took the university to court over action it says, 'impacted on fundamental employee rights.' In the Federal Court Justice Craig Dowling agreed, 'they were entitled to complain or inquire about their ability to perform their work within the 'anticipated hours' contained in their contracts of employment. Those complaints should have been free of consequence,' he said. The court slugged the university with \$74,950 in fines, 'It is important that the penalty is sufficient to deter the University from any repetition of the contravening conduct,' Justice Dowling said. There could be more to come. In February 2023 the FWO filed a separate litigation alleging underpayment of Uni Melbourne Arts casuals. It remains before the court. (Future Campus – 12 April)

Academic cheating providers are more precisely targeting previous and potential purchasers, the Tertiary Education Quality and Standards

Agency warns. There is 'a substantial reduction' in traffic to websites offering cheating services, a product targeted by TEQSA but an increase in reports of targets contacted direct by email and class groups being targeted by messaging apps or social media platforms. And cheating services are targeting users for identity theft and blackmail – including access to provider email and learning management systems. This, TEQSA warns, is 'a cyber security risk that institutions need to be aware of and mitigate.' (Future Campus – 12 April)

Jobs and Skills Australia reports the top ten jobs where workers are in short supply. Registered nurses, primary and secondary teachers are all in the 'long training gap' category, where there are few qualified applicants and where it takes time to qualify. There is a 'suitability gap' for software programmers caused by enough qualified applicants but without 'employability skills' and work experience. However JSA adds without explanation, 'another factor which may be in play is unconscious bias of employers.' 'The solution is to enhance the attributes of qualified applicants through investing in their employability skills and work experience.' (Future Campus – 12 April)

The Regional Education Commission annual report includes 'ideas for consideration' some line-up with the Universities Accord, (of which Commissioner Fiona Nash was a member). Others are in line with existing-

anticipated government policy. Resource schools to offer career advice, 'recognising that VET and higher education offer parallel pathways to success'. Financial support for compulsory course placements, 'to improve higher education attainments in the regions'. Establish regional university study hubs on TAFE campuses. Significant increases of CSP places for 'regionally-based, end-to-end medical schools'. HELP fee relief for early career veterinarians in rural areas and changes to course admissions 'to ensure places for students with a commitment to regional and remote practice. Allowing unis with regional HQs to apply for funding from the Growing Regions Program. Regional linkages to connect schools, VET universities, Study Hubs, business, industry and community, 'to build student aspiration and address access, attainment and workforce issues'. It does not suggest providing all regional university chancellors a red bike and a pony, perhaps the Commission thought they were in the Accord. (Future Campus – 12 April)

Uni Tasmania is selling two Hobart hotels it bought pre-pandemic to meet demand for student accommodation until new rooms of its own came online. Which has now happened – U Tas has 1,500 beds and a 78% occupancy rate. Earnings from the sale will fund STEM. It's a change from prior to the pandemic, when there were 150 people on the university housing list and no private rentals to be had in Hobart. (Future Campus – 12 April)

Small Business Can Eat Uni R&D Lunch by Stephen Matchett. The science establishment argues it needs ever more money for productivity-improving research. The Reserve Bank has another idea. In a speech last week, RBA Assistant Governor Brad Jones addressed innovation in a way that should alarm university and discipline research lobbies, not least because it ignored them. Dr Jones argued that small and medium enterprises, especially professional, scientific and technical services are taking the 'innovation baton' from large firms, including early-stage R&D and research IP. And he made the point that innovation is about more than entirely new products and processes, it is also about 'adaptation and diffusion of other cutting-edge ideas and processes across the economy.' It is a point the Productivity Commission made in a report last year, 'In Australia, innovation policy has tended to give pre-eminence to interventions that foster the creation of novel productivity-enhancing ideas and technologies in selective parts



of the business sector, including by leveraging the frontier research expertise in universities.' 'Where innovation policy focuses mainly on cutting-edge scientific or technological breakthroughs, it tends to miss the way firms in much of the economy are innovating on the ground.' Which rather detracts from the R&D funding pitch presented by university and science specific research lobbies who want more government money for them and less for businesses that do not partner with the public sector. Calls for the government to ensure 3 per cent of GDP is spent on R&D are perennial. Science and Technology Australia, for example, campaigns for a commitment of 2.4 per cent of GDP going to research and development by 2030 and 3 per cent by 2035. At 1.68 per cent now, Australian outlays are a full percentage point behind the OECD average. And the research community also wants the Commonwealth to change what it funds. Critics complain that the Research and Development Tax Incentive accounts for \$3.4bn of the Commonwealth's \$9.2bn budget for direct research support this financial year argue funding would be better used by public research, or at least by businesses cooperating with universities. But Dr Jones points out that the R&D Tax Incentive is, 'arguably the most valued and direct source of cash flow support for innovating SMEs' and that given small and medium enterprises make up the overwhelming majority of firms in Australia, 'it would only take a small increase in the share of these businesses to successfully innovate to have a material impact on the Australian economy.' (Future Campus – 15 April)

An ID for Ideas: A National Persistent Identifier Will Save Researchers Time and Create New Opportunities by Stephen Matchett. A persistent identifier can identify resources used and outputs of research, Australia needs such a system and now there is a strategy to create one. It's the work of the Australian Research Data Commons and the Australian Access Federation. what they are: PIDs are alpha-numeric codes identifying observations, information and data in research which can link to metadata, 'thereby establishing provenance and attributes'. The big benefit: 'optimising the research and innovation ecosystem through facilitating understanding of how elements of the ecosystem, including investment, use, outputs, outcomes and impact, relate to one another.' The evidence is: ORCID (which is a PID for people) already saves time in ARC grant applications. 'By linking

researchers to projects, grants, organisations and equipment, we can improve research reproducibility, provenance and attribution.' How to make it happen: a roadmap is in development. (Future Campus – 15 April)

Fifth VC Chair Ready to be Filled by Tim Winkler. University of Wollongong Vice-Chancellor Patricia Davidson has announced that she is stepping down from her role, meaning that there are currently vacancies for four VC roles across the country. Professor Davidson is stepping down after three years in the hot seat at UoW, 'to have more time to continue my research in the care of people living with chronic and complex conditions and advocacy for global health.' The University of Western Sydney, University of Canberra, Edith Cowan U and Avondale University are also in the process of seeking and/or appointing Vice-Chancellors at the moment. (Future Campus – 22 April)

What Makes Academics Happy (and What Management do to Stop It) by Stephen Winkler. Despite 'neoliberal policies and employment practices,' there are academics who find joy in their work.

In a [new paper](#), Craig Whitsed (Curtin U) and colleagues asked 36 full time continuing academics what brings them joy in work. Given subjects expressed unhappiness with managements and workloads and the study started during COVID, the obvious answer would be 'not much.' Obvious but wrong, demonstrated by their interviews focused on how people felt about four 'key dynamics' in their work; students, teaching, research and interacting with colleagues.

- Students: 'great joy was derived from seeing their students succeed, and from watching them grow intellectually and professionally as this related to employment outcomes.' But (and it is quite a big but), this is diminished by, 'changes to academic work such as increased administrative responsibility, research productivity measures, and allocated work demands perceived to be unreasonable.'
- Teaching: 'it is a connection. It is the feeling of knowing you are making a difference. It is nourishing, rewarding, and sustaining.' However, they resented management imposed expectations that took time away from teaching.
- Research: 'the joy of exploration, discovery, and dissemination. It's the 'agency' and satisfaction associated with developing new research and

seeing this making a difference ... the relationships built with doctoral students and seeing them succeed.' As with, teaching they resented demands on their time that reduced research work.

- Colleagues: 'collegiality, solidarity, and unity,' which they lament is diminished by restructures and mergers.

The joy eaters: are management demands on their time. 'Choice and agency are related to time. Similarly, camaraderie and teamwork, in other words, connection, and meaningful interactions with students and colleagues are afforded less opportunities (time) to be realised because of the competing pressures and escalating demands'.

What is needed: 'a reconceptualisation of academic work allocation and design has the potential to increase academic staff experience of agency, self-efficacy, self-determination, and connectedness, which are all antecedents of joy in work. This, however, will require all stakeholders to think differently.' (Future Campus – 22 April)



Ways to Make a Difference in Ensuring Research Funding Outcomes by Stephen Matchett. How research funding is allocated needs further research – commitments to 'excellence' can mean whatever grant agencies want.

Adrian Barnett from QUT is exploring multiple aspects of the issues involved, notably in the survey he is conducting with Paul Glasziou (Bond U) to learn what researchers want to know about the way research funding systems work (Future Campus April 12) and in a new paper he co-authors on the costs of different funding systems.

The authors suggest seven issues to investigate.

1. Data on who gets how much and for what: including analysis of success rates and funding by gender. They also propose an intriguing variable, whether technical terms in applications work better than promises of 'innovative', 'ground-breaking', or novelty
2. Reliability and predictive validity of funding decisions: bibliometrics can rate peer reviewer and funding agency judgements but not impact



on, for example, 'societal challenges.' Question is what measures to use, 'we know far more about the limitations, caveats, and gaming potential of traditional bibliometrics than those of alternative indicators, which may be as gameable or even more gameable'

3. Democratisation of funding evaluations with customised bibliometrics: 'rather than relying on a small and often opaque group with unclear selection criteria, researchers would be assessed by the broader scientific community through their citation counts'
4. Alternative funding models: thematic grants, funding to address a specific issue, lotteries for pre-approved applicants. While the authors do not know what would work best, 'a systematic review suggests that greater funding dispersal is likely to be beneficial'
5. Consideration of the economic cost of submitting grants: by discipline and for basic and applied research
6. Evaluation of epistemological costs: at organisation, and national level. 'Are countries with a higher share of competitive funding less good at simultaneously supporting risky research, normal science, variety, and stimulating the promising parts of this variety?'
7. Consideration of social and ethical costs: 'go beyond' surveys to create a 'more supportive and ethical research environment'

'It is crucial to be specific about the various aims of science funding and the criteria that follow, and it is as crucial to be specific on how to measure these criteria so as to avoid noise and bias,' they write. (Future Campus – 22 April)



Just What the ACCORD Ordered – Australia's First Degree Apprenticeship by Stephen Matchett. Industry organisation AiGroup, the Australian Submarine Corporation, BAE Systems (as in British Aerospace) and Uni South Australia have launched what is billed as Australia's first degree apprenticeship. It's a combination of a job and an honours degree in software engineering, with the program recognised by regulator, SA Skills Commission and supported by the SA Government. The Commission ties the

program to an existing shortage and the AUKUS submarine program's future need. National planning agency, Jobs and Skills Australia reports a shortage of software engineers across the Commonwealth. The University's existing software engineering programme offers the possibility of students working with an industry client on an honours year project, 'from brief through to project delivery' but the degree apprenticeship is about continuing employment and study, with paid work embedded from the start. The course is five years, rather than the standard four for Honours, with academic content front-loaded – by their final year students will be on campus for classes one day a week and working the others. This has the potential to be a big deal indeed. While there are 13 students in the first intake that translates to 150 students across the first five-year cycle and bigger starting classes are expected in future. And it is in-line with Mary O'Kane and colleagues' Universities Accord call for 'new models of learning and earning.' But creating degree apprenticeships across the economy will require entrepreneurs who can put employers, universities, and VET providers, together, especially if the model is to include small and medium enterprises, where the jobs are, rather than just giant corporations. As well as BAE, which has degree apprentice programme at its UK submarine yard, Uni SA is partnering with SA company Consunet (electromagnetic warfare). AiGroup is also working on a dual electrical qualification with Uni Southern Queensland and Queensland TAFE, for the State Government and with RMIT, on a degree apprenticeship in systems engineering. (Future Campus – 24 April)

[University Alliances often fail, but still have value.](#) The grand challenges facing society, are so big, so complex, such wicked problems, that no single university can solve them alone, Merlin Crossley explains. (Future Campus – 24 April)

Annual reports of Queensland and WA universities (FC today, [HERE](#) and [HERE](#)) are canaries in campus coalmines and they might develop nasty coughs. Domestic student demand is not booming and growing international fees will be important while locals stay away. But if international ed lobbies and their mates in the media are right, the Feds are working to reduce the revenue stream. If so, how long until other universities follow Federation U in announcing staff cuts? (Future Campus – 26 April)

Uni Wollongong had a big day for VCs last Friday. In the morning former VC Ken

McKinnon and wife Suzanne Walker kicked the tin with a \$5m gift to support Higher Degree Research fellowships. They are repeat donors, stumping up \$1.3m in 2016 for an innovation fund to assist 'innovative programs, activities and ideas' from staff and students (Campus Morning Mail February 10 '16). And in the afternoon, present VC Patricia Davidson announced her exit. Apparently, it is time for new leadership, which seems hasty – she only started in May '21. And last May-June, she and colleagues wrote a series for Campus Morning Mail on a new admin structure for the university – it read like the work of a team just getting started. UoW is now light on for experienced leadership – former Chancellor Christine McLoughlin left late last year, after three years. (Future Campus – 26 April)

Universities copped a reputational walloping last year for the way they investigated sexual violence on campus.

A Senate Committee inquiry reporting on what it heard stated that it, 'cannot over-emphasise how troubled it is by these outcomes, nor over-state how disappointed it is in the university sector's overall response,' (Future Campus, September 15). And now universities are now subject to investigation by the newly adopted National Student Ombudsman, who will hear student complaints about sexual assault, harassment and violence at their institutions. Uni Melbourne appears keen not to attract the Ombudsman's attention, releasing its 2023 report on sexual misconduct and what the University does about it, both investigations and staff training. Uni Melbourne reports that of 23 complaints last year, 17 were in the university's ambit, eight of which were substantiated, four weren't, two were withdrawn and three investigations continued into this year. Five staff were terminated in '23 for sexual misconduct, three of them over complaints starting in '22. The report states Uni Melbourne, 'is resolute that lawful decisions to remove an employee from the workplace ... will not be overturned or lead to the payment of compensation.' (Future Campus – 26 April)

Changes to the Fair Work Act apply as of August, including casuals being employed on fixed term contracts – but not in universities and higher education institutions, where academics and teaching staff, plus anybody else covered by the HE Academic and General Staff Awards, are explicitly excluded. This appears to be because managements and union representatives are deep in the weeds on how contracts for casuals will



apply and it is taking time to work through the complexities of university and research institute practice and the Byzantine complexity of their enterprise agreements. Last November, the Government gave parties six months to sort out an agreed approach and word is they are talking to, as opposed to at, each other. The system's dependence on casuals makes getting contracts right especially important for managements – terms of employment could well attract the attention of the Fair Work Ombudsman, when, or if, it decides university managements have finally worked out how to pay people what they are legally owed. And managers really need to not underpay anybody. As of January, there are two penalties for individuals, up to ten years in prison and a \$1.565m fine. That's individuals, and don't think the FWO would not go after people personally. Earlier this month the Federal Court imposed \$4m in penalties on a restaurant chain that had a, 'calculated scheme to rob employees of their hard-earned wage.' Two managers were sluggish with fines of around \$100,000 each. (Future Campus – 26 April)

Regulator TEQSA is consulting on proposed changes to its 'fit and proper person' test, including 'whether the public is unlikely to have confidence in a relevant person's suitability to be a person who makes or participates in making decisions that affect the whole, or a substantial part, of a registered higher education provider's affairs.' Depends on the definition of 'public,' but FC suspects few, if any VCs would have statistically significant name recognition in a random sample poll. (Future Campus – 26 April)

Queensland Uni Annual Reports: The Omens Aren't Auspicious. The second tranche of Queensland university annual reports for 2022 is tabled in the Queensland Parliament.*

They are not awash with good news for this and coming years, unless domestic demand recovers all of a sudden and warnings about decline in enrolments from India turn out to be misplaced.

QUT student numbers up, a bit. Total enrolments were up year on year by just under 2,000 to 52,073, due to a nearly 3,000 lift in international numbers to 9,820 – domestic enrolments declined by nearly 1,000. The increase in internationals shows in the bottom line, with on-shore fee income up \$67m on 2022. Staff numbers were stable, but costs were up \$52m, to \$660m, which the university attributes to a 1.2 per cent

overall FTE increase and higher wage costs, due to increases in the recent enterprise bargaining round.

All up, QUT revenue and income was \$1.188bn (up \$184m) against expenses of \$1.209bn (up \$73m) for a net loss of \$20.89m, compared to a net loss of \$130m in 2022. The improved result was largely driven by strong returns on investments with the State Government's Queensland Investment Corporation.

However, the University also reports changing its underlying result calculation to exclude significant items, such as realised investment gains not used to fund core operations. On this basis, there was an operating loss of \$86.9m or 7.9 per cent. (These numbers are not in the audited financial statements).

Uni Sunshine Coast hopes for growth.

USC predicts growth in student numbers – it will come off a stable base, (17,800 heads and 11,400 EFT in 2023, both close to where there were in 2019). But locals are making up the numbers, with last year's international enrolment (1,903), half of 2019s. Staff count was at a five-year high last year, but not so you would notice, 50 up on last year, but at 1,145 just one more than in 2020.

Overall income was up \$22m on 2022 to \$368m, attributed particularly to consulting, contracts and investments but expenses increased \$36m to \$347, due to rises in staff cost and student recruitment, 'as the university strives to increase its enrolments and secure future growth.'

Operating margin was 5.7 per cent, \$20.8m, down from 10.1 per cent, \$34.9, in 2022.

Uni Southern Queensland student numbers down, again

Revenue was up just under \$40m, to \$378m, due in considerable part to an \$11m lift in international student fees, but expenses were \$382m, compared to 2022's (restated) \$348m, 'largely attributed to additional investment in student attraction and retention activities and expenditure on external research projects.' The 2023 loss (\$25.8m) was in line with negative results for '22 (\$25m) and '21 (\$21.4m).

All up, student load was down for the fourth straight year, peaking at 13 969 in 2020 and falling to 11536 in '22.

Staff numbers were stable (1795) but \$22m hike in staff costs to \$253m, was

'due primarily to the impact of the new Enterprise Agreement' – which presumably means pay rises. Staff costs include \$6m, 'to provide for the estimated employee liabilities identified from a voluntary payroll review.' This may mean management discovering that they had been not paying people what enterprise agreements specify.

Central Queensland U states domestic demand 'stagnated'

CQU had a better year for international student revenue, up 76 per cent on 2022, to \$133m but warns that a return to pre-pandemic numbers is slow. Domestic demand isn't great either, according to the university it 'stagnated,' (at 8960 EFTS) with revenue down \$0.66m, due to 'the strength of Australia's post-COVID economy, with strong employment outcomes and jobs growth, together with cost-of-living pressures, reducing the demand for higher education.'

Overall spending was up \$50m, half of which is wage increases in the new enterprise agreement and 'increased teaching requirements for increased student load,' (sorry no idea what that means).

Total Income was also up, by \$60m, to \$479m, for an operating loss of \$7.6m, compared to \$24.3m in 2022.

* Annual reports for Griffith U, James Cook U and Uni Queensland were tabled at the start of April. FC reported them [HERE](#). (Future Campus – 26 April)



[Burnout, Instability Threaten Health & Medicine Academics by Tim Winkler.](#)

A new report outlines how funding instability and burnout are impacting careers of early and mid-career academics (EMCA's) in health and medicine across Australia.

The [first national survey](#) of 660 EMCAs working in health and medicine disciplines found that more than 80% would not recommend an academic career to others. Developed by researchers from the University of Melbourne and Monash University Drs George Taiaroa, Kelly Kirkland, Belinda Lawford, Courtney Walton, Katrina Long and Associate Professor Darshini Ayton found that unstable research funding,



short-term contracts and staff burnout were key issues driving disillusionment.

The report found that the majority of respondents (58.2%) were employed on fixed term contracts, and more than half had less than a year remaining on their contract.

In results that should send chills through health faculty Deans across the country, almost half (46.4%) said they were thinking of leaving their profession and almost one third (31.8%) reported experiencing bullying or harassment in the workplace.

An astonishing 52.7% reported that they had observed research misconduct. In a sign of the toll that excessive hours and workplace stress can have on home life, while 54.3% reported work-related burnout, more than two out of every three respondents (66.9%) said they were experiencing personal burnout.

The report makes a range of practical recommendations for consideration at the national level, including addressing the decline in research funding in real terms, improve the clarity and fairness of grant assessment and development of nationwide strategies to make higher education careers more attractive.

The report found that EMCAs were far more likely to be satisfied and recommend academia as a career when they had a high level of satisfaction with their supervisor.

The report makes it obvious that universities can pitch supervisory excellence as a key drawcard to bolster their EMCA workforce, but also recommends training for supervisors and practical approaches to address security and sustainability of employment. (Future Campus – 29 April)

The Genius of Jason Clare: Big H Governance Change, But Little Unis Can Do by Stephen Matchett. The Education Minister announces action on the University's Accord that will corral criticism if there is not much new money in the budget.

Last Friday's State and National Education Ministers meeting agreed to establish 'an expert governance council', to 'develop ten priorities on which university governing bodies will be assessed.'

The minco communique saves the faces of university chancellors by stating that it is based on a proposal from their Council, but it is also a second response from Mr

Clare to Mary O'Kane and colleagues' Accord recommendations.

Last August, Mr Clare appointed an officials group to advise on university governance and campus safety (FC August 9) and in November, an Ombudsman was created to take complaints from students, especially on how their institution dealt with sexual assault cases.

Now the Minister is responding to long-running campaigns by the National Tertiary Education Union, which is permanently peeved that Councils have business-based members and by the scale of Vice-Chancellors' pay. The Union, with ample evidence, also complains about universities underpaying staff.

The minco noted three top-level intrusions into institutional autonomy (FC's words, not the communique) that demonstrate the government is already on the case. They are all significant expressions of no-confidence in university leaderships:

- Expanding the Tertiary Education Quality and Standards Agency's regulatory remit to require HE provider processes 'meet industrial and workplace obligations' including, 'to faithfully implement enterprise agreements.'
- Obtaining independent advice to establish priorities 'to ensure universities are exemplary employers'
- The third point implicitly endorses the worst community perception of universities; that they rely on, but exploit casual staff – calling on institutions to supply more information to the government, 'to increase transparency and understanding of workforce patterns and issues.'

To make it all happen, the members of the yet-to-be-announced 'expert governance council' will set out ten priority areas, on which universities 'will be required to report their compliance' paraphrased as:

- Including at least one council member from outside the institution who has university leadership expertise
- Governing bodies must engage and consult with the university community
- Council appointments reflect the diversity of society and the characteristics of a university's community

- Gender-balance on Councils 'in-line with jurisdictional and Australian government targets'
- First Nations representation on Councils and engagement with university policies
- Ditto for students
- Ditto for staff
- 'A rigorous and transparent selection process' for new council members
- Members have training 'on the specific responsibilities and expectations of their role'

And then there is one that will really annoy Councils who cling to ideas about autonomy, but which they will live with: 'demonstrate and maintain a rigorous and transparent process for developing remuneration policies and settings for senior university staff, with consideration given to comparable scale and complexity public sector entities, and ensure remuneration policies and packages are publicly reported.'

The bulk of universities will claim that they already meet the first nine requirements and will promise to do even better.

As for the tenth, they will wear it, on the basis that it could have been way worse if Mr Clare had wanted to score low-cost, high-impact political points.

This is superb politics by the Minister. None of these will replace Councils with Soviets to suit the NTEU, but they are enough for the Minister to credibly respond to the comrades' complaints when the Government does not give university communities everything they expect to get from the Accord.

And university leaderships won't complain loudly – media coverage of VCs pay and staff duded on wages will make it hard to argue against any of what they are required to do. (Future Campus – 29 April)



HELP Hike Hits Home by Stephen Matchett. Graduates were double whammied on their study debt ANZAC eve. HELP debts are set to increase by 4.7 per cent according to the indexation formula, which includes the 1 per cent CPI hike in the March Quarter. In part that was due to a 6.5 per cent increase in tertiary education costs.

The imminence of the extra impost probably had something to do with the



Prime Minister all-but-announcing changes to what he insists on calling HECs last week. The policy options are not all obvious, but the learned Andrew Norton suggests a new indexation rate should be the lower of CPI or a 4 per cent cap.

Something needs to be done, for two different political reasons. One is nearly 3 million voters have study debt and the government needs to be seen to be doing something. The Greens think all public tertiary education should be free and the independent member for Kooyong, Monique Ryan, has 260,000 signatures on her petition for a change in indexation, based on the indisputable premise that increases make study debt harder to pay off.

Last year, when inflation made indexation rates an issue, the Government batted it away by pointing to the genius of the income contingent loan system and how it expanded HE access without slugging taxpayers. The party line was backed by Universities Australia. In March '23, then CEO Catriona Jackson was acknowledging the system could be adjusted 'so that it's not putting too much pressure on students too early' but she was clear that HELP had to stay. 'Free means paid for by the taxpayer. It doesn't come out of nowhere. It's got to get funded from somewhere. If you think about that really clearly, paid for by the taxpayer means that everyone in the community is subsidising a system.'

Perhaps the Government and HE establishment assumed that inflation would pass, but it hasn't, which makes study debt a timing problem. Last week the Prime Minister responded to a media question about what people still insist on calling HECs repayments, 'up near like credit card rates' The system 'could be simpler and fairer,' he said.

And it has to change fast, perhaps giving the Government something immediate to announce in a pre-Budget response to the Accord, timed to reduce expectations of more money for universities. It would be backed by university lobbies who would rather complain about funding but will not dare.

Universities Australia chief Luke Sheehy made the graduate-friendly case on Wednesday, 'we recognise young people are facing increasing cost-of-living pressures and have called for targeted support for students in the May Budget. Changes to make HELP simpler and fairer would make a big difference to people's lives.'

Smart move, if only to stop people questioning whether study debt makes degrees a bad deal. Certainly course costs do not deter undergraduates – demand for law, business and humanities degrees have not collapsed since the coalition's Job Ready Graduates package set study costs, \$16,200 per annum next year, at four times what nursing and teaching students will pay.

But entering the fulltime workforce and facing decades of study loan repayments on top of tax clears minds. The risk for universities is a debate on whether degrees are value for money in the long term. Young people are already asking this and many are deciding they aren't, if WA and Queensland university 2023 annual reports are any indication, starting enrolments are done across the country. Domestic enrolment decline is currently attributed to a strong employment market, but universities cannot afford a focus on return on educational investment, especially if it extends to what they charge and what they deliver. (Future Campus – 29 April)



\$2.85M Swinburne Shortfall in Spotlight by Tim Winkler and Stephen Matchett.

Swinburne University has owned up to underpaying 1,699 casual employees \$2.6 million between 2017 and 2023, with more than \$200,000 also owed to Swinburne College casuals.

VC Professor Pascale Quester revealed the [underpayment in a statement yesterday](#) after the University self-reported to the Fair Work Ombudsman – the latest university to identify a long-term payroll systems failure.

The wage theft case has eerie echoes of [the University's 2018 issues](#), when then VC Linda Kristjanson wrote to staff apologising for \$3.66 million in underpaid superannuation and interest, which were revealed after an internal investigation.

The chronology of the two issues suggest shortcomings with a system-wide approach to paying staff.

Professor Quester said the University had taken significant steps to ensure the same issues did not happen again, including, training, system and communication improvements.

The NTEU expressed anger and claimed that it has identified more than \$170

million in underpayments across the Australian HE sector.

Across town at the University of Melbourne, there have also been payroll problems. The Federal Court has just fined the University close to \$75,000 for the way it treated two casual staff who complained they were required to work more hours than their contracts specified. The Fair Work Ombudsman also has a case that the University underpaid Arts Faculty casuals before the Court. This follows a 2021 case where the University was found to have underpaid casual academics to the tune of nearly \$10m.

Several other universities have also confirmed payroll issues.

With the Government prevailing upon the States to beef up university governance just last week, this latest scandal will do nothing to strengthen university's bargaining power.

Education Minister Jason Clare has regulator TEQSA working on requiring HE providers to 'meet industrial and workplace obligations,' particularly, 'to faithfully implement enterprise agreements.'

Mr Clare also wants independent oversight of what senior university staff are paid, 'with consideration given to comparable scale and complexity public sector entities, and ensure remuneration policies and packages are publicly reported.' (Future Campus – 30 April)



Government Announces Oversight of Teacher Education Academics by Stephen Matchett. Education Minister Jason Clare has announced membership of the Initial Teacher Education Quality Assurance Oversight Board (FC Appointments, Achievements below). It's a recommendation of the Scott Review of ITE, and 'will work to improve the national consistency and quality of initial teacher education.'

It is the culmination of a long and bipartisan process based on assumptions that whatever is wrong with schools, teacher education courses are often to blame.

This all started with sometime Coalition Education Minister, Chris Pyne who commissioned a review of ITE chaired by Greg Craven, then VC of ACU, one of the biggest teacher ed providers.



'Not all initial teacher education programmes are equipping graduates with the content knowledge, evidence-based teaching strategies and skills they need to respond to different student learning needs,' the review stated.

Mr Pyne responded in part by commissioning national literacy and numeracy tests for new teaching graduates and an overhaul of teacher education courses. The former became LANTITE and the latter culminated in Mark Scott's review of teacher education.

The reform push lost its way under subsequent Coalition Minister Alan Tudge, who in 2021 twice criticised ITE faculties for 'ideology and fads' in instructional practice and mentioned that the Government could 'use the full leverage of the \$760m' that goes to teacher training to address their concerns.

But Mr Tudge also commissioned Professor Scott, who reported to Jason Clare after the change of Government. Mr Clare picked up the report and is still running with it, while astutely avoiding culture-warring about the best way to teach children to read.

Instead, he has presented himself as a friend to all teachers, (for example on workloads) and teacher education academics with practical programs, like the quality teaching round program developed by a Uni Newcastle team. 'Our teachers are experts at what they do – and who better to learn from than each other,' Mr Clare said in a funding announcement.

But he goes in hard on the failures of ITE academics in general. 'If you ask most teachers, they will tell you that when they first became a teacher, they didn't feel prepared for the classroom. That the prac they got when they were at uni was not up to scratch,' he said on ABC RN last May.

'What they learnt at university didn't give them all the skills they needed to teach students to read or to write or to manage a difficult and disruptive classroom.'

This is a politically-sustainable sell, given the failure of the ITE establishment to make cases against allegations on the three big political issues in education metrics:

- PISA scores in free fall – these common claims disregard research, notably by Sally Larsen at Uni New England, (Future Campus, October 4 2023)

- Low STEM retention in senior school years particularly for young women, despite parental opinion having plenty to do with (Campus Morning Mail, May 4 2021)
- ATAR entry scores deemed insufficient – which ignores other ways people come to teaching degrees.

As Greg Craven has pointed out, it's not the selection basis for ITE courses that matters, it is what students learn. Performance tests before they can enter classrooms can measure that.

'The 'solution' to the 'problem' of teaching quality has already been found. It is being implemented. Our job now is to keep pushing, to ensure that everyone involved meets their commitments, in full and on time,' Professor Craven said back in 2018 (CMM November 29).

And there is the ITE establishment's problem – it is now generally accepted that teacher education is not meeting its commitments. Just ask Jason Clare. (Future Campus – 1 May)



Few Lessons from Covid by Stephen Matchett. The pandemic at the end of WWI shutdown Australian universities, but they were quick to move on when it ended – just like now.

A Senate Committee inquiry into the case for a Royal Commission on COVID-19 demonstrates the pandemic's continuing impact on Australians. It sets out comprehensive terms of reference, including how government management impacted higher education.

There were four submissions by universities (with 12 more from academics and research teams) out of 2000 in total. Managements focused on their own specific experiences.

They decried exclusion from the Commonwealth JobKeeper payment, 'which resulted in significant losses of staff at a time when universities were pivoting very to new forms of delivery and having to step in to provide social and financial support services to students,' as Uni SA put it.

And they criticised the absence of support for international students, with ANU warning this was a set-back for universities trying to reduce dependence on China.

But there was not much insight into how the pandemic changed – is still changing – the way we work. Uni Melbourne commented, 'many staff (particularly women and part-time workers) noted the benefits of increased flexibility, reduced commutes, and an improved work-life balance. However, many felt a greater sense of disconnection from peers and co-workers.'

Overall, it was left to the National Tertiary Education Union to sum up their take on the sector-wide impacts, 'it was a time marked by excessive workloads, increased stress and psycho-social harms and worries over job security. Higher education staff who kept their jobs did their utmost to pivot to new online teaching and learning platforms and appropriate administrative, academic and pastoral care (while juggling work at home/carer arrangements). This was not always successful.'

It appears universities want to put the pandemic behind them – which was what they did last time. According to Sean Brawley (then Macquarie U) a bare year after the 1919 influenza pandemic, which infected 40 per cent of Australians, it was back to business as usual on campus.

'By the start of the new 1920 academic year there were no public discussions about the impact the pandemic had had on Australian universities over the previous year,' he wrote in Campus Morning Mail, (15 March 2020).

Time should have changed. Universities now position themselves as integral to the fabric of the nation and yet have reflected very little on the sectoral impact of one of the most extensive disruptions of Australian society in living memory. (Future Campus – 1 May)



Victorian University Annual Reports: Better But Not Great by Stephen Matchett. Reports for 2023 were tabled in State Parliament this week. Overall results demonstrate universities are recovering from the Pandemic, but there are problems ahead unless enrolments keep improving – new enterprise agreement pay rises have to be funded somehow.

Deakin U

The consolidated underlying net result was a \$92m deficit, \$27m worse than in 2022. Total revenue was \$1.318bn, 10 per



cent up year on year. A \$73m increase in course charges, 'predominantly' from onshore internationals was a big contributor. However, total enrolments (people not EFTS) were stable on 2022, at 50,850. Consolidated staff costs were up 13 per cent, to \$804m. 2022 total operating income was still \$45m lower than pre Covid 2019.

Federation U recorded an \$80.9m loss on \$295m income, up from a \$41m deficit in 2022. It attributes the result in part, to 'the slow return in international students' and 'the decline in domestic student numbers.'

La Trobe U

Total student headcount was 36,100 last year – still 2,500 short on the last full year pre-Covid, but there was a 1,500 increase on 2022 and commencements were strong; 15,500 compared to 14,600 in 2019. International enrolments (reported as EFTS) totalled 6,500, well up on 4,600 in '22. The 6 per cent increase in operating revenue, to \$866m, was driven by student starts, 'reflecting an overall upward market trend.' But despite the good news, LTU just broke even, reporting a \$3m net surplus with an underlying loss of \$22m. The surplus is largely down because of a \$40m bequest booked in 2022.

Monash U

The overall result for the entire Monash Group was an underlying net loss of \$145m on revenues of \$3.281bn, up \$400m on '22. However, this was driven by a loss on net investment funds, with an operating result of \$33m in the black. Staff headcount was marginally up on '22 to just short of 10,500, but costs increased \$200m to \$1.674bn. Student headcount on Australian campuses was 74,880; just 100 down on 2019, however in a [separate statement to staff](#) university management warned, 'in order to return to something like a normal financial performance, akin to what the University achieved in 2019 ... we need to further strengthen revenue growth through initiatives aimed at increasing student enrolments.'

RMIT

Student headcount across RMIT's five Australian teaching areas and overseas operations was marginally better (91,500) in 2023 than '22, but still down on the 96,000 on '21. RMIT states 2023 provided the first increase in international student revenue in four years and a strong performance in South East Asia reduced

the impact of inflation and the 'ongoing effects' of the pandemic. Consolidated income was up \$160m to \$1.623bn and expenditure increased to \$1.635bn, for an after-tax deficit of \$11m, a \$16m improvement on '22.

Swinburne U reports a positive net result of \$24m, a turn-around from a \$42m loss in 2022. 2023 revenue was nearly \$140m up on 2022, mainly due to a \$70m increase in fee and charge income and investment income turnaround from a \$31m loss in '22 to earnings of nearly \$30m last year. Staff costs increased from \$377m in '22 to \$416m last year. The university had a good year for enrolments with commencing EFTS (11,600) well up on '22 (9,200). International EFTS were up 1500 on '22, to 19,500.

Victoria U

Total HE enrolments continued to increase from 28,500 in 2020 to 34,200 last year but load expressed by EFTS was relatively stable, increasing from 21,100 ('20) to 21,800 ('23). VET load declined over the period, from 7,000 to just under 5,700. However, an increase in international students, 'strongly driven by our offer in early childhood education' was the major driver for a 27 per cent overall increase in revenue, to \$583m. However, there was an \$18m net operating deficit, created in part by one-off staff costs related to a 'transformation program.' The underlying net deficit for the VU Group was \$40.8m.

University of Divinity

Enrolments fell from 562.9 EFTS in '22 to 487.9 in '23. The University had an operating loss of nearly \$1.3m on revenues of \$12.9m.

University of Melbourne

Student enrolments, expressed as EFTS bounced around by not much through the pandemic and at 53,900 last year, were 500 or so less than in 2019. Internationals, which the university states as a percentage were at a 5 year high of 45 per cent; 1 per cent higher than in 2019. However, staff have increased and at 10,514 in 2023 are exactly 1000 more numerous than in '19. Operating income last year was \$2.893bn for a \$71m operating loss, which includes discretionary financing, endowment income and infrastructure grant. This was \$33m less than in '22 and is 'primarily due to student numbers approaching pre-pandemic levels, largely driven by the return of internationals.' Expenditure is up as a result of increased teaching and

research costs, wage increases and inflation. Staff costs (higher pay and more people) were 11 per cent up in '22. The results are in line with a strategy for 'a phased return to financial stability'. (Future Campus – 3 May)



[Cementing Indigenous Self Determination in Australian Universities by Prof Susan Page and Prof Michell Trudgett](#). Increased enrolments of

Indigenous people and new approaches to self-determination outlined in the Accord are welcome, but the sector has a responsibility to do more.

Alongside the aspiration for greater numbers of Indigenous people to obtain degrees, there are two key ideas for Indigenous Australians in the Australian Universities Accord Final Report.

1. Indigenous matters should be at the heart of the higher education system.
2. Indigenous self-determination must be a primary component of the sector going forward.

The Report outlines several key recommendations to see these aspirations realised including a Review of Indigenous Higher Education, an Indigenous Commissioner on the Australian Tertiary Education Commission and the establishment of a First Nations Council to advise the Minister and Commission.

While these recommendations are welcome, there is not just an opportunity but also, we argue, a responsibility to do more.

Self-Determination as A Vehicle to Disrupt the Sector

Indigenous Australians have driven considerable change in the Australian Higher Education sector over the last five decades, breathing fresh life into the crevices and silent spaces of disciplines, and transforming the research landscape through Indigenous-led scholarship, whilst raising the ethical and obligatory benchmarks for best practice.

These changes have benefited all in the sector, but this contribution is difficult to sustain without adequate protection and recognition for our people working in the sector and our cultures.



Self-determination, rather than advocacy, has the potential to reposition Indigenous peoples within institutions, placing Indigenous matters at the heart of the higher education sector and potentially disrupting current practices that can entrench Indigenous disadvantage.

Enacting Self-determination in a University and Higher Education Sector Context

For Indigenous people to truly be at the heart of the Australian higher education system, there will need to be effective mechanisms for Indigenous involvement in university and high-level sector decision-making that extends beyond tokenistic representations to meet broad equity aspirations. (Future Campus – 3 May)



Next financial year repayment rates for HELP loans are announced with a 5.6 per cent increase in the threshold for each income band. The starter salary is \$54,434, up from \$51,560 this. Top rate is 10 per cent on incomes from \$159,600. Cue hollow laughter from HELP debtors reading government advertising, 'from July 1 every taxpayer gets a tax cut.' (Future Campus – 3 May)

Adelaide is equal first local government area in Australia for the biggest proportion of renters who are international students – 24 per cent. The other is Burwood, in Sydney. SA Premier Peter Malinauskas will need a plan to house the influx of internationals he expects once Uni SA and Uni Adelaide merge – a plan which deals with outrage over property development. Singapore developer Wee Sur Holdings has a development application for a 19 story, 700 bed student residence in Adelaide city. It is on the site of the Crown and Anchor pub, a music venue locally loved as 'the Cranker.' The façade would stay but that isn't enough to placate protestors and Greens MLC Robert Simms has a deploring motion before the chamber in which he suggests alternate city sites for a tower. If there is ever an award for opposition to education expansion in CBDs Adelaide will come close to Hobart. (Future Campus – 3 May)

Here's a point for the 'do degrees deliver good jobs' debate university thought leaders do not want. The 2024 [pre-budget report](#) from the Commonwealth's Economic Inclusion Advisory Committee mentions that as of

last May, 'a large proportion of unemployed persons have high levels of education attainment' – 25 per cent a Bachelors or better. (Future Campus – 3 May)

Property industry lobby, the Student Accommodation Council argues international students are not driving up rents and soaking up accommodation, only accounting for 4 per cent of rentals. And more purpose-built student housing would bring the benefits of more students, without hurting renters. Perhaps the Council should come back in a couple of years when the political cycle has moved from bipartisan ideology of fewer international students being good; when Australia starts to recognise it needs the money they bring. (Future Campus – 3 May)

YTD international enrolments for February (updated April 26) demonstrate that the Feds visa cuts weren't biting then. But bite they will. Commencements for all sectors and nationalities were 177,000, which is 20,000 up on last year and 40,000 higher than the last pre-pandemic year. Total enrolments were 703,000, nearly 20 per cent up on February '19. YTD HE commencements were 88,000 for February, 8,000 up on Feb '23. VET starts were 41,000 in '23 and 50,000 this year. HE starters from India were down by nearly 4,000, to 4,000; but VET commencements from India were up by more than 1,500, to 10,000. But there are fewer starts to come. Home Affairs reports education visas granted for the financial YTD to March (249,000) is way down on the full 2022-23 financial year (499,000). Higher ed visa grants for the first three quarters of '23-'24 is 154,000, compared to 261,000 for all of '22-'23. VET has halved, from 128,000 in '22-'23 to near 62,000 last FY. The figures for India confirm suggestions that Home Affairs takes a dim view of the educational aspirations of its applicants with 28,600 visas for HE study awarded this financial year, compared to 62,000 last. The VET figure is way lower; 5,000 this FY to date and 22,000 last. (Future Campus – 3 May)

Charles Sturt U is back in the big smoke, opening a North Sydney CBD campus, managed by education services giant, Navitas and teaching, business, accounting and IT. It hasn't been gone long – it bailed on its previous Sydney teaching centre, managed by Study Group, in '21. (Future Campus – 3 May)

Government HELPs itself with study debt cut and new prac payment by

Stephen Matchett. The Federal Government has made its second move in weeks to neutralise universities as an election issue, by announcing discounts on HELP scheme study debt and new funding for students doing course-compulsory work placements.

The much-hinted prac announcement is for 68,000 eligible HE and 5,000 VET students in teaching, nursing, midwifery and social work courses. It will pay them \$319.50 a week while on clinical and professional placements and while means-tested, is additional to any other income support (presumably including funding from State Governments). It addresses the 'placement poverty' problem, where students have to give up jobs while on pracs, especially if they are away from home.

And as all-but-universally-anticipated, there is also some help for graduates. The indexation rate applying to HELP loans will be the lower of the Consumer Price Index or the Wage Price Index, backdated to June 2023. Last year's HELP interest increase was 7 per cent, twice wage rises. This year's rise was set to be 4.7 per cent, also well above inflation.

Overall, average HELP debt across the nearly 3 million people paying off loans is around \$26,000, but the recent surge in inflation has made paying back principal and indexation daunting for recent graduates and is no doubt terrifying for students now in business, law and humanities who are slugged \$16,000 a year in course costs, under the Coalition's Jobs Ready Graduates policy, which is still in place.

Using wage instead of consumer price growth will not silence policy commentators. Andrew Norton suggests high inflation applies to both and that the government should cap indexation at 4 per cent, or the CPI, whichever is lower. And the modest credit grads will get, \$1,345 for last year and this on debt, will not quieten claims that the government should end indexation altogether – although it is not often mentioned that this would erode the value of the \$69bn in HELP debt on the government's ledger, over time.

This is all super smart politics.

Funding for prac placements demonstrates that the government values degrees and diplomas that deliver core community service. And it supplements the HELP sell.



'Placement poverty is a real thing. I have met students who told me they can afford to go to uni, but they can't afford to do the prac,' Education Minister Jason Clare says.

And lest anyone miss who prac funding will help, he adds, 'the majority of students and workers in these critical care fields being women, the payment also helps implement the Government's gender equality strategy.'

The new HELP indexation rates starve the Greens of oxygen by reducing payments while sticking to the principle of HELP as a loan, not a gift. The claim by Coalition treasury and education shadows Angus Taylor and Sarah Henderson that inflation under Labor makes the change, 'all trickery and deceit' will likely be ignored by opponents of JRG.

And, while student debt is not reduced, it gives the government a big Budget number to announce. 'This action taken will wipe around \$3bn in student debt – easing pressure on workers and students across the country,' is the pitch. Such a big number that Education Minister Jason Clare will be able to quote it as demonstrating the Government's commitment to higher education, if there is not much more money in the Budget for Accord projects.

Universities Australia recognised reality yesterday, making the most of the announcement.

'We know cost-of-living is factor in people's decision to start and finish university and this relief will give people more confidence in pursuing a degree while providing much-needed support for those already paying off a HELP debt,' UA CEO Mr Luke Sheehy said.

A line which Mr Clare will likely quote as well. (Future Campus – 6 May)



Yet Another Vacant Chair as TEQSA Head Departs by Tim Winkler. Peter Coaldrake will vacate his seat as Chief Commissioner of TEQSA this Friday, prompting further speculation as to whether the Government will announce a new all-powerful Australian Tertiary Education Commission as part of next week's Budget. The Commission, proposed in the Accord Final Report, is expected to have a broad remit – as Craig Fowler outlines in his article on advice to an incoming ATEC head (Future Campus –

below). The resignation of the former QUT Vice-Chancellor was announced at the same time as Dr Mary Russell was appointed CEO of the Agency, after acting in the position since June 2023. Dr Russell joined TEQSA after working in another regulatory role at the Australian Health Practitioner Regulation Agency (AHPRA) and has been appointed as CEO for a five-year term. Professor Coaldrake's decision to step down creates yet another leadership vacancy in the sector, as institutions brace for change through the Accord, Federal Government bravado over student visa restrictions and AI. The regulator has faced a raft of recent changes and is widely expected to report to the ATEC if the new Commission is established. As Jason Clare mulls the best time to announce his new regulatory framework, one thing is certain – a group of new and/or relocated HE leaders will be occupying a significant fraction of the sector's leadership hot seats over the next 12 months. (Future Campus – 6 May)

New Ways to Distribute Research Funding: The Arc has Ideas by Stephen Matchett. The Australian Research Council (ARC) is reviewing the National Competitive Grants Scheme and invites 'all interested parties to engage.'

At least, that is, parties who remember Minister Clare's Statement of Expectations for the ARC of August 22 last, and are sufficiently in the social-media loop to know about the Council's discussion paper, released last month (FC found mentions on what was Twitter dating from April 8 and 30).

The paper asks for advice on six themes: grant purpose/impact; structure of program; alignment with other government funding for research; diversity of research sector; support for Indigenous researchers and research and national priorities.

While the ARC is asking for feedback, there are hints on what it thinks should happen.

The report acknowledges 'different approaches to monitoring, evaluating and communicating the impact of the projects' and then points to a consultant report for the Council, which suggested an 'impact evaluation framework, including data-driven approaches,' for the NCGS.

And it suggests there may be opportunities to, 'to support greater creativity and innovation through research that pushes the frontiers of

knowledge,' perhaps by allowing peer reviewers to access AI.

Plus, it considers encouraging collaboration, across countries, disciplines and with SMEs (noting this should not get in the way of other government programs).

The ARC also asks for advice on how to support 'a more diverse cohort of early and mid-career researchers.' But it hints that, 'there may be options to provide greater opportunities for ECRs to be supported.'

As for 'improving access for underrepresented groups,' the ARC says that 'measures that could further promote the diversity of researchers funded through the NCGP include applicant anonymisation, or semi-anonymisation, and partial randomisation of grant selection.'

For women specifically, the ARC mentions the Irish requirement for equal numbers of men and women on grant applications and the National Health and Medical Research Council's gender balance on grants. For Indigenous Researchers, 'there may be the opportunity to support more Indigenous researchers through Discovery Australian Aboriginal and Torres Strait Island Awards or similar fellowships.' The paper points to the Canadian requirement that Indigenous research applications, 'include evidence of support from affected or invested communities' but suggests this could increase administration, which is already identified as a burden.

On encouraging basic research and relating ARC funding to other government programmes, the council's aspirations are ambiguous, 'acknowledging the unique role of the ARC in supporting basic and applied research, but not experimental development, there may be opportunities to build better connections and strengthen the NCGP's links to the wider network of government research funding.' This takes the Council to research that supports national priorities, which it points out are not a requirement for most NCGP schemes. But on this, the biggest policy question in the paper, there a no nudges. The ARC points to an EU programme that has three purposes, curiosity driven basic research and infrastructure, mission driven and innovation, including with business, but otherwise asks how the NCGP be structured to support national priorities.



Anybody interested who missed the ARC announcement needs to get cracking. Deadline for submissions is May 13. (Future Campus – 6 May)



Uni not-so super by Stephen Matchett. As of late yesterday, UniSuper member services were still off-line, as they have been since Thursday. Around 9pm (AEST) Thursday night the giant fund (\$124bn assets under management) emailed members to say there was a 'service disruption,' although a fund member tells FC that they were not able to access accounts from Tuesday last. UniSuper was quick to advise that the disruption was not due a cyber-attack and none member data was exposed. On Friday, the Fund had something to add; that it was all the fault of Google Cloud, which provides data support services – and that members' money is safe. So safe that members and employers could not access payments and services – unless of course UniSuper helped out. 'We are finalising how we are able to process member requests during this time in a way that is fair and equitable for members, as you expect and deserve.' Which is where members were late Sunday – with no word on whatever went wrong would be fixed. And if they wanted to ask anybody, they could wait. The 'questions about the outage' page had a 'We are here to help' statement, 'between Monday to Friday 8.30am-6pm.' (Future Campus – 6 May)

Dear ATEC Chair...As the sector prepares for the expected announcement of an Australian Tertiary Education Commission, Dr Craig Fowler considers what advice to offer the new Chair. (Future Campus – 6 May)

It must be budget season. All around Canberra, the trees are vivid shades of red, yellow and orange, and the federal government is starting to roll out its pre-budget announcements. Over the weekend, we had two significant new policies for higher education. Yesterday morning the government said it wants to 'wipe' about \$3 billion in student debt and change the way student loans are **indexed**. At the moment, debts are pegged to inflation, which has become increasingly stressful and problematic for students. As higher education policy expert Andrew Norton **writes**, 'last year, high inflation pushed the indexation rate to 7.1%, the highest since 1990'. In the face of growing community pressure, the government now plans to base indexation

on whichever is lower: the Consumer Price Index (CPI), which measures inflation, or the Wage Price Index (WPI), which measures hourly wage rates in the same job. The government will also backdate the new system to 2023, thereby cancelling an estimated \$3 billion in debt. While the Universities Accord final report in February recommended the CPI/ WPI approach, Norton notes that actually cancelling debt is a 'surprise move'. It should be a welcome one for the roughly 3 million Australians with student debt. But it doesn't necessarily mean the issue is solved. As Norton warns, the WPI has only been lower than the CPI four times since 2000: 'the government's fix for 2023 leaves students vulnerable to times when the CPI and the WPI are both high'. In a second announcement yesterday evening, the government **revealed** a 'Commonwealth Prac Payment' of \$319.50 per week for those studying to be a teacher, nurse, midwife or social worker. Currently, some students have to give up paid jobs to complete lengthy unpaid work placements as part of their degrees. They fall into 'placement poverty' as a result. But with some degrees left out of the new payment, which is not due to start until mid-2025, expect fierce debate about the fine print. (The Conversation – 6 May)

BIG DATA, DATA ANALYTICS, BUSINESS INTELLIGENCE

The Implications of AI in Higher Education. AI tools can serve as a meaningful asset to both instructors and learners in higher education, but general guidelines, broad accessibility and workforce applicability must be kept at the forefront. (The Evollution – 22 April)

There is a day-long event next month for My eEquals users and developers which is long up and successfully running, with 87 ANZ institutions participating and 2.5m accounts created. This contrasts with the long (and still) awaited proposal for a Commonwealth 'skills passport.' Submissions to a Department of Education discussion paper closed in February since which digital silence has continued. DoE's paper did not mention My eEquals, which seems strange, given its success. (Future Campus – 24 April)

REPORTS AND RESOURCES

Fuelling Growth Through Senior Leadership Championing Continuing Education. Continuing education units

must and should play a key role in institutional strategy, but fulfilling its potential to be a critical source of education for a wide variety of learners with diverse needs requires getting leadership buy-in. (The Evollution – 15 April)

Unlocking Maximum Impact in Course Management. Continuing education units can be extremely beneficial for learners, the broader university and industry. But taking advantage of its full potential requires proper course management. (The Evollution – 15 April)



CHE Trends in China's Digital Landscape White Paper is **now available!** This White Paper serves as your guide, shedding light on key trends shaping China's digital landscape in 2024 and beyond. CHE supports overseas education institutions and companies in engaging the Chinese market, and our team is pleased to share our analysis of China's rapidly evolving international education industry as it affects global higher education mobility.

Click Here for a Full Version of the White Paper

Some highlights include:

- **Online Information Essential:** China's post-pandemic new normal underscores the significance of online sources for study abroad information.
- **WeChat Dominance:** WeChat remains China's largest social media platform, boasting over 1.3 billion monthly active users, making it crucial for universities to establish a presence.
- **Weibo's Decline:** While Weibo remains useful, its quality of traffic has decreased, particularly for undergraduate recruitment, but it still holds value for graduate recruitment efforts.
- **Rise of Short Video Platforms:** Douyin has surged ahead as the 9th most popular social media platform



globally, offering opportunities for organic engagement and PPC ads.

- **XiaoHongShu Expansion:** Expanding beyond e-commerce, XiaoHongShu is becoming a live streaming-focused social platform with PPC ad opportunities.
- **SEO/SEM Importance:** Universities need to stay abreast of SEO/SEM trends, utilizing platforms like Baidu, Zhihu, and Toutiao for effective marketing.
- **Virtual Tours:** With in-person visits less common post-pandemic, the quality of virtual campus tours becomes crucial in influencing students' decisions.
- **Generative AI in Marketing:** Generative AI is revolutionizing university marketing in China, enabling the creation of personalized content for digital platforms, presenting both opportunities and challenges.

[Unraveling the Skills Gap Between Higher Ed and the Workforce](#). The synergy between higher education and the workforce often fluctuates, influenced by market dynamics that demand constant vigilance. To effectively meet evolving needs, collaboration across all stakeholders is critical to ensuring meeting learner needs in a changing landscape. (The Evollution – 20 April)

[Unraveling the Skills Gap Between Higher Ed and the Workforce](#). The synergy between higher education and the workforce often fluctuates, influenced by market dynamics that demand constant vigilance. To effectively meet evolving needs, collaboration across all stakeholders is critical to ensuring meeting learner needs in a changing landscape. (The Evollution – 22 April)

[Building a Strong Digital Foundation to Drive Student Engagement](#). Attracting and retaining students is crucial for the success and growth of any educational institution. An institution's website plays a pivotal role in this process and has to be well thought out to meet the needs of learners. (The Evollution – 27 April)

How the increase in temporary visa holders may affect the international education sector. This week, we are looking closely at the total number of temporary visa holders in Australia and how this metric affects current and future

strategies in the international education sector.

This [10-minute video](#) explores the data beyond the headlines, providing valuable insights on:

- The actual impact vs. reported figures: We delve into the fact that not all student visa holders are physically located in Australia.
- How reporting times can affect the data: You'll learn why the timing of data can skew the picture and how to get a more accurate understanding.
- The bigger picture of net migration: We discuss the importance of considering both arrivals and departures when analysing migration patterns.
- The under-discussed role of Australian student departures abroad: This analysis highlights the role of Learning Abroad in the conversation of net migration.

We hope that this information is useful for you and your team. You can see the video via the following link:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wsjWu3zHzE>

You can download the slides presented in this chart of the week video at this link: <https://present.saleshandy.com/view/ygV5QmNF5QEUgVVd#page-1> (Keri Ramirez, StudyMove – 29 April)



[NCVER Snapshot – Driving towards a green economy](#). NCVER has recently released a new product, NCVER Snapshot, which aims to provide brief insights into topics relevant to the vocational education and training (VET) sector. The first issue, Driving towards a green economy, provides a short overview of the automotive industry and the VET sector as it pertains to electric vehicles (EV) using NCVER and external information. It takes a look at the rise in EV popularity in Australia, employment opportunities in the automotive sector, the need for more electric and hybrid vehicle skillsets, and the collaborative efforts underway to address skills demand in the EV space. (NCVER – 1 May)

[Improved employment outcomes for onshore international students](#). The latest report from the National Centre for Vocational Education Research (NCVER) shows that international students continue to experience improved

employment outcomes after completing a vocational education and training (VET) qualification in Australia. The report, International onshore VET qualification completer outcomes 2023, shows that 76.6% of international onshore qualification completers had an improved employment status after training, an increase of 3.6 percentage points from 2022. Of the 82.8% of international onshore qualification completers who were employed in Australia after training, 46.9% were employed full-time, a 10.2 percentage point increase from 2022. NCVER Managing Director Simon Walker explains, 'The positive employment outcomes may reflect the strong labour market in Australia as well as the Australian Government's decision to lessen restrictions on student visa holders' working hours in January 2022 in response to workforce shortages.' International onshore qualification completers' satisfaction with training also increased. The proportion of those satisfied with their training overall rose by 1.6 percentage points to 88.8%. 'After an uncertain period for international students during the COVID-19 pandemic, we have seen a significant increase in new international onshore VET students between 2021 and 2022. The survey findings show that these students are becoming increasingly satisfied with training in Australia overall which has been gradually increasing since 2020', said Mr Walker.

Background:

This publication provides a summary of the outcomes of international students who completed a nationally recognised vocational education and training (VET) qualification in Australia during 2022 using data collected in mid-2023. These students were surveyed as an additional component to the 2023 National Student Outcomes Survey. Survey invitations were sent to 58 836 qualification completers and of these 13 594 responded to the survey, resulting in a response rate of 23.1%. (NCVER – 2 May)

New Issue of the Journal of the Australian & New Zealand Student Services Association

The JANZSSA editorial team is delighted to present Volume 32, Issue 1! This rich compilation of professional practice papers, research articles, and opinion pieces will inform the advancement of student services in higher education in Australasia and internationally. Topical themes include student equity and the university experience, careers and employability, respect and consent



education, peer learning, parental engagement, supporting mental wellbeing, and enhancing academic confidence. View the open access issue on the JANZSSA website.

<https://janzssa.scholasticahq.com/issue/10316>

Call for Papers: Journal of the Australian & New Zealand Student Services Association

Submissions are now open for the JANZSSA October 2024 issue. If you would like to contribute a professional practice paper or research article on enhancing student engagement, participation, wellbeing, and success in post-secondary education, submit your manuscript by 31 July 2024.

<https://janzssa.scholasticahq.com/post/2455-janzssa-call-for-papers-volume-32-issue-2-october-2024>. (JANZSSA – 2 May)



The Transformative Role of Continuing Education in Higher Ed.

Continuing education is in a constant state of evolution, adapting to the changing needs of learners and the demands of the modern workforce. As it heads into the future, continuing ed is poised to play a key role in institutional strategy. (The Evollution – 4 May)

Adapting to Changing Enrollment Trends in Higher Ed.

With higher ed institutions looking for ways to increase enrollment numbers, it's critical that they utilize data to get to know their learners in order to properly meet their needs. (The Evollution – 6 May)

The Transformative Role of continuing Education in Higher Ed.

Continuing education is in a constant state of evolution, adapting to the changing needs of learners and the demands of the modern workforce. As it heads into the future, continuing ed is poised to play a key role in institutional strategy (The Evollution – 6 May)

Last week, StudyMove presented our 'Analysis of 2024 International Tuition Fees' and want to share this information.

Australian universities changed their pricing position this year with an average increase of 5.1% compared to last year. This is the first time that universities adjusted their fees at this level since 2019. In this analysis, we provide you with an update that includes an analysis of

average international fees, the role of scholarships and the effects of university rankings. You can see the session via this link:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Ze4jKwMhLPA>

We cover the following topics:

08:00 – What was the increase in international tuition fees across the university sector

15:32 – The pricing position of universities in 2024

22:19 – What programs reported higher increments than the average

26:21 – The role of international scholarships

33:42 – How university rankings affect international fees.

You can also download the slides of the presentation via this link: [Key Data Update – 2024 Analysis of International Fees.pdf](#). StudyMove is proud to provide key data to support your university's pricing position. We provide a range of comprehensive reports to support your strategies each year with 2024 reports available now –

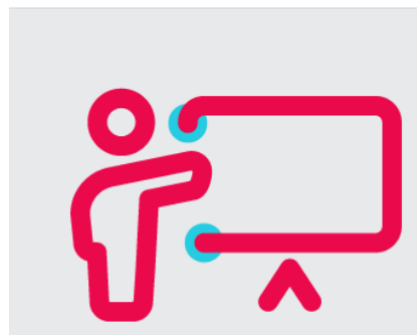
<https://www.studymove.com/index.php/d-ata-shop-international-education!>

(StudyMove – 7 May)

Please contact us if you have any questions or would like to learn more about our various reports!

HE CONFERENCES AND EVENTS

Click '[HE CONFERENCES AND EVENTS](#)' above to see all the events we have listed on our website. Below are just a few.



Altis Public Training Courses

Build your Information Management knowledge and hone the skillsets required to manage the proliferation of organisational data. From strategic planning to implementation and management, our extensive suite of

training courses provides you with critical insights and structured learning across the IM value chain.

Cole Nussbaumer Knaflic, author of 'Storytelling with You'

Transform data into unforgettable stories with Cole Nussbaumer Knaflic, author of 'Storytelling with You.' She joins host Jon Krohn for our latest podcast episode, offering mesmerizing insights on impactful storytelling. Plus, get a chance to snag her latest book! Watch the full episode here: <https://bit.ly/sds757>

ATEM programs

The Association for Tertiary Education Management provides high-quality professional development and leadership programs for the tertiary education sector in Australia and New Zealand.

Professional development events can be found by [Browse the ATEM PD programs calendar](#) or [Search programs and events by region](#).

TRAINING AND DEVELOPMENT

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

ATEM Understanding the Sector.

[Explore the structure, governance and operations of your institution and the broader sector.](#) Designed for newcomers to tertiary education, and for those in specialist or senior roles that require a grounding in policy, regulation, compliance, risk, finance and strategy. The minute-taking and committee programs are perennial favourites.

ATEM Compass. Save the Date – Wellington, New Zealand. Sunday 26 to Wednesday 28 August 2024. Following the success of last year's first-ever gathering in Wellington, ATEM Compass returns to the Aotearoa capital in August 2024. Seated in the central business district, our venue is conveniently close to shops, cafes and restaurants. Wellington's vibrant waterfront is within walking distance. Use the [webform to express your interest](#) in this program.

AIR Webinars

AIR provides online resources, innovative practices, professional development opportunities, and training for AIR members and non-members and the higher education community, including assessment, planning, and related fields.





INSTITUTIONAL RESEARCH CONFERENCES & EVENTS

LOOKING FOR AN EVENT?

Look no further!

AAIR finds the most relevant events in the IR space and brings them together for you on our website.



**CONFERENCES, EVENTS, TRAINING, PROFESSIONAL
DEVELOPMENT, WORKSHOPS, AND MORE ...**

Click here to visit air.org.au/events



Data Analytics micro-credential scholarship on offer – study for free

Want to upskill and be in demand in data analytics? Learn to analyse and interpret information, and take consumers on a journey through visually appealing and engaging insights, with one of our micro-credentials. We've created four data-focused micro-credentials – developed in partnership with IBM and proudly funded by the NSW Government – to help you upskill and take your career to the next level:

- Data driven storytelling
- Data analytics for non-data minds
- Data analytics for business success
- Data analysis and insights.

[Find Out More at Charles Sturt University.](#)

Data Science Melbourne

This is a group for anyone interested in 'Data Science'. We are not quite sure what the exact definition of a Data Scientist is, but if you deal with something generally related to converting data into useful insight then you will hopefully benefit from joining the group. Please follow the link to join in the group and [follow the events posted on Meetup.](#)

ON THE MOVE

Merlin Crossley has been appointed Interim Deputy Vice-Chancellor of Research & Enterprise at UNSW, in addition to his role as DVC Academic Quality, following the departure of Nicholas Fisk. He will also continue his research on CRISPR gene editing to treat inherited blood diseases (and write for Future Campus in his spare minutes).

ANU chancellor Julie Bishop becomes United Nation Special Envoy on Myanmar.

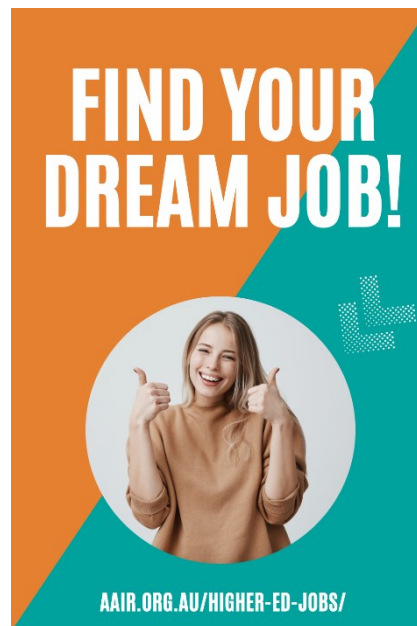
Rebekha Brown is appointed ANU provost. She moves from DVC R at Monash U. At Western Sydney U, Deborah Hatcher moves from nursing dean to PVC Academic Development and Rod McClure steps up from dean of medicine to PVC Health Futures. Michele Simons, previously education dean, becomes Associate PVC Transnational Education.

Sunny Yang returns to Monash U to take up the new role of VP for International Engagement. She moves in May from Uni Newcastle, where she has spent the last year as PVC Global Partnerships.

Australian Catholic U COO Stephen Weller gives it away after 11 years. 'Time for a break and then on to my next career adventure.'

Steven Warburton (Uni Newcastle) becomes president of the Australasian University Leaders in Learning and Teaching.

POSITIONS VACANT



Find a Job

If you have a job vacancy that you would like advertised through AAIR, please submit a job ad for consideration.

Advertise a Job

CALL FOR CONTRIBUTIONS

A great way to get involved with the AAIR community is to share your thoughts and ideas. Do you have something you would like to share with your IR colleagues? Please send your contributions to the editor@aaair.org.au.

A reminder about the organisations' social media links to keep you up-to-date and in touch with all the latest news and events.



ENEWS SIGNUP

[AAIR on Twitter @AAIRaustralasia](#)



[Andrew Bradshaw](#)
Editor, *The Institutional Researcher*

DISCLAIMER

The opinions expressed in this newsletter are those of the individual writers/authors and not necessarily those of AAIR or the institutions that make up the AAIR membership.

