



AAIR Newsletter August 2024



Photo by Andrew Bradshaw: Balmoral Beach, Sydney

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FROM THE PRESIDENT

The 2024 Olympic Games in Paris were nothing short of spectacular. From the lavish, mesmerising opening ceremony, to the breathtaking venues and, of course, the incredible results for both Australia and New Zealand. This event truly had it all.

Australia once again proved its sporting dominance, securing an impressive 4th place on the medal table. Meanwhile, New Zealand, a nation with a slightly smaller population than Victoria, made history by finishing 11th overall. For Australia, this was their most successful Olympics ever, while New Zealand celebrated their highest-ever gold medal count.

What truly stood out in Paris was the exceptional performance of the wāhine (women) athletes from both countries. Swimmer Mollie O'Callaghan became Australia's most successful athlete at the Paris 2024 Olympics, taking home three gold medals, along with a silver and a bronze. From New Zealand, kayaker Dame Lisa Carrington added three gold medals to her already illustrious career, bringing her total to five golds, a silver, and a bronze across her Olympic journey.

Behind these awe-inspiring achievements lies something often overlooked: the power of data. These athletes didn't just wake up one day and decide to be champions. Their success is built on years of meticulous planning, rigorous training, and, crucially, data. Whether it's comparing results, tracking performance, or analysing time trials, data is at the heart of their preparation and success.

In the world of sports, data analysis is big business. The professionals who work with elite athletes are highly skilled, applying their expertise to ensure these athletes have every chance of achieving their dreams of Olympic glory.

As institutional research professionals, we play a similar role within our institutions. We support our learners in achieving their dreams, just as sports data analysts support their athletes. We provide the data and analysis to enable our institutions to ask critical questions: What does success look like? How successful are we? What strategies are working, and where can we improve? How will we know when we've achieved success for our learners?

Like those sports data analysts, our focus must always remain on the learner, because they are at the core of everything we do. Our institutions are dedicated to educating and creating critical thinkers, and our work is crucial in ensuring that mission is fulfilled.

Tertiary education in both Australia and New Zealand is grappling with a host of challenges. Institutions are struggling to define who they are and what they stand for, all while striving to meet the needs of increasingly diverse populations. On top of that, there's the ever-present concern of securing enough funding to keep the lights on and ensure staff are employed.

In the face of these challenges, I urge you to step up and demonstrate how your professional practice is making a real difference for every learner in your institution. Your work matters now more than ever. Join us at the 2024 AAIR Forum in Adelaide from 18 to 20 November, where you will have the opportunity to share your insights, learn from others, and collaborate to find solutions. By coming together, we can fortify the entire tertiary education system, ensuring it remains strong and resilient for our learners, teachers, leaders, and fellow professional staff.

Nāu te rourou, nāku te rourou, ka ora ai te iwi
(With your food basket and my food basket, the people will thrive)

Stuart Terry, AAIR President



EDITORIAL

Dear newsletter readers

Spring is approaching in the southern hemisphere, and the weather is warming up. I have taken this opportunity to enjoy some of the many bushwalks around Sydney Harbour during July. One of my most enjoyable is Mosman to Balmoral Beach. Some of the scenery around the harbour is majestic, and unlike the river Seine in Paris (for those who watched the summer Olympics), the water is blue and glistening.

There is a lot happening in the Australian university sector, with ongoing discussions on the international student caps legislation, and the impacts this will have on funding within many of the Australian universities. For those interested, keep an eye on [Andrew Norton's LinkedIn account](#), where he discusses many of the concerns of the legislation.

We are looking forward to the [AAIR Forum](#) coming up from 18–20 November in Adelaide, where many of us will have the opportunity to catch up and discuss many of the relevant issues happening in universities across Australasia. More information about the forum is in this newsletter.

Andrew Bradshaw
Editor, The Institutional Researcher

AAIR NEWS

Upcoming AAIR events

[Futureproofing Enrolment Planning \(Including the Accord and the Budget\) Using Machine Learning and AI](#)

13 September 2024 (12–1pm AEST / 2–3pm NZST) | Online

Facilitator: **Alex Sieniarski**, AAIR Load Management and Planning SIG Chair

Machine learning (ML) and artificial intelligence (AI) are revolutionising the landscape of enrolment planning in higher education. These technologies harness vast amounts of data to provide unprecedented insights and predictive capabilities, enabling institutions to make more informed decisions. In this session, we will delve into how the University of Notre Dame leverages ML and AI to enhance enrolment strategies, ensuring the University is resilient and adaptive to future challenges. Topics for discussion will include:

- Innovative AI-driven techniques for predicting student enrolment trends
- The integration of the Accord and the budget within enrolment planning frameworks
- Case studies illustrating successful implementation of ML models
- Addressing ethical considerations, data governance, and privacy concerns in AI applications
- Strategies for overcoming common obstacles and maximising the effectiveness of AI tools in enrolment planning.

Join us as we discover how AI and ML are shaping the future of enrolment planning, making it more robust, accurate, and responsive to the evolving educational landscape.

Pricing

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

REGISTER NOW

[Business Intelligence & Analytics SIG ConvAAIRsation 3/2024](#)

25 September 2024 (12–1pm AEST / 2–3pm NZST) | Online

Facilitator: **Lester DSouza**, AAIR Business Intelligence & Analytics SIG Chair

[Registration is open](#). More information coming soon.

Pricing

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

REGISTER NOW

[National Results from the International Student Barometer](#)

9 October 2024 (12–1pm AEDT / 2–3pm NZDT) | Online

LIVE WEBINAR

Facilitator: **Cassandra Saunders**, AAIR Surveys and Evaluation SIG Chair

Guest Presenter: **Kyla Steenhardt**, Associate, Edified

The International Student Barometer (ISB) is the world's largest international student experience survey of enrolled students. It tracks and benchmarks international student opinion across the entire student journey, providing institutions with data and insights to develop a world-class student experience.

In this SIG session, we will be joined by Kyla Steenhardt from Edified (who provide localised support for Australian/New Zealand institutions that participate in the ISB), who will be sharing key findings from the 2023 ISB from the Australian/New Zealand perspective.

Pricing

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

REGISTER NOW



Join us in Adelaide for the 2024 AAIR Forum



18–20 November 2024 | Adelaide, SA

Call for abstracts NOW OPEN

The 2024 Annual AAIR Forum: After the Accord, where festivals and grapevines bring us together is going to Adelaide for the first time in years!

This year's AAIR Annual Forum program is guaranteed to excite as specialists share their rich experience, and discuss key topics, and strategies in response to an everchanging higher education sector in a rapidly changing world.

leverage similar experiences from our New Zealand and international counterparts.

Pre-Forum workshops and Special Interest Groups (SIG) will run at Flinders University City Campus on the day before the main Forum sessions, on 18th November 2023. The main Forum sessions will be held close by at the Intercontinental Hotel Adelaide.

Registration is now open, and we look forward to welcoming you to Adelaide!



We invite you to submit an abstract under one of the following themes:

- How is the sector responding to the Accord?
- Building an institutional research thought-leadership capability
- The evolving role of the institutional researcher

- Compliance and Government reporting reform
- Business intelligence, analytics, visualisation and modelling – the foundations of IR

Abstract submissions will be open until 6 September 2024.



We welcome back our major sponsors

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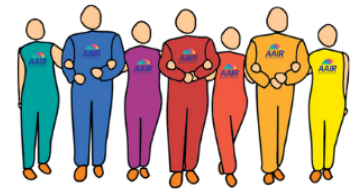
Our forum theme, after the Accord, where festivals and grapevines bring us together, will allow us to reflect and provide some thought leadership into how the institutional research community can support higher education in addressing the Australian Government's Australian Universities Accord plan. Whilst there is an Australian flavour to this year's theme, there will also be lots of opportunities to hear, learn and

- Justifying the value of higher education and research
- Evidence-based strategic planning (and implementation)
- Benchmarking for continuous quality improvement
- Informing learning and teaching through evaluation and surveys
- Realising benefits – the role of institutional research in enterprise and transformation projects

To see more AAIR events, please visit our events page at

<https://aair.org.au/event-location/aair/>.





AAIR EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

CALL FOR NOMINATIONS

Download the
Nomination Form

EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE MEMBER

It's an election year at AAIR, and we are seeking nominations for Executive Committee members for the period commencing at the 2024 AGM (to be held during the AAIR Forum in November 2024) until the 2026 AGM.

The nomination process occurs well before the AGM and you do not have to attend the AGM to successfully nominate.

Benefits of being on the AAIR Executive Committee:

- Fantastic professional development opportunity
- Contribute your knowledge of the industry
- Increase your knowledge of the sector
- Gain an in-depth understanding of higher education issues at the international and domestic levels
- Embed yourself in the IR community

Please send your completed nomination to:

SECRETARY@AAIR.ORG.AU

Institutional researcher's corner

Sitting in our institutional researcher's corner this month is our very own Vice President, Don Johnston.

Five quick questions with Don Johnston, Manager, Reporting and Analysis



What is your job title?

Manager, Reporting and Analysis at Southern Cross University.

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

My role primarily is to manage the reporting of student and staff data through the Tertiary Collection of Student Information (TCSI) at Southern Cross University. We have a very capable team here who work closely with the various areas of the university, and ensure the data is collected, validated, and reported in a timely manner. Each year we then go through a comprehensive process to ensure that what we reported in the previous calendar year is complete and verified.

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

A strong understanding in the areas of data collection and analysis, along with the ability to clearly articulate insights

gained from institutional research undertaken using the various datasets that are now available. Also, an awareness of what is happening within the higher education sector and the ever-changing regulatory frameworks.

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

There is always an increasing appetite for more data, to not only demonstrate the great work being undertaken, but also to identify new areas of learning into the future; particularly as finances become further constrained as we move forward. Continuing to further understand AI is critical as it increasingly permeates into the higher education sector and the world in general.

What does being part of the AAIR community mean to you?

Having been a member of AAIR for nearly 30 years has helped me enormously with my role here at Southern Cross University. Working as part of a small team at a regional university, it is easy to feel you are the only one experiencing certain issues that arise in your workplace, or you are uncertain who to reach out to with the various questions that we all have.

From the first AAIR Forum you may attend, you will quickly realise that most of us are experiencing similar things, and have the same questions. Being part of the AAIR community opens the opportunity to reach out to people at other institutions to see how they might be dealing with these similar issues. The AAIR community is one that fosters support, encouragement, and immense collegiality within its membership.

About 15 years ago I was lucky enough to join the AAIR Executive Committee (the last few years as Vice President). Being on the AAIR Executive Committee has allowed for a greater involvement in the association (often being involved in the organisation of the annual forums). Nominating for the Committee is something I would encourage you to think about doing no matter what your level of experience is, as we all have something to contribute.

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

... a wonderful and very capable team to work alongside, as well as a very supportive management team above.

[Connect with Don](#)



AAIR member contributions

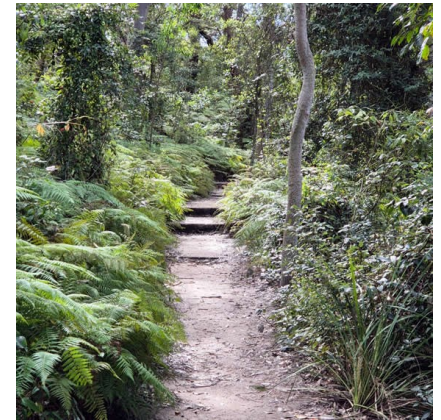


Photo by Andrew Bradshaw: Mosman to Balmoral Beach bushwalk, Sydney

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

[CONTRIBUTE](#)

QILT UPDATES

July 2024 Updates

Student Experience Survey (SES)

2024 SES

Sample processing has now wrapped up for the 2024 SES. We thank institutions for their patience and perseverance during this busy time. From the week beginning Monday 15 July, we will send out sample selection files so that institutions can review the final in-scope population for your institution.

The 2024 SES August collection is scheduled to begin with a staggered launch on Tuesday 30 July, and for the September collection, begins on Tuesday 10 September. Participating institutions will be notified prior to each launch once the samples are ready for review in the Reporting Module.



For institutions participating in the August collection, now is the time to start planning your pre-survey engagement activities. We recommend that all institutions run at least one engagement activity prior to fieldwork commencing. This helps to build a sense of legitimacy and trust amongst students, thereby encouraging survey completions.

Recommended response maximisation activities for this stage of the collection are detailed in the engagement activity plan in the Collection and Sample Guide available on the provider portal.

The Marketing Pack is now available for download from the provider portal. We are trialling a new set of marketing assets featuring contemporary designs in this year's SES, with the view of rolling this style out across all surveys and eventually retiring the existing designs. If you have any feedback on this new marketing pack, we would love to hear from you – we'll also be asking you about them in the Respondent Engagement Survey.

Once again, we would like to thank everyone for their cooperation during the sampling process this year and we look forward to another successful collection.

Graduate Outcomes Survey (GOS)

2024 GOS

Post-field reminder calls concluded in mid-June, marking the end of the May round and the 2024 GOS collection. We have now moved into the post-processing period and are busy preparing the data for institutional release on Friday 30 August.

For institutions that participated in fee-for-services activities during May, you can expect to receive an invoice from us soon.

We will release findings from the 2024 GOS Respondent Engagement Survey (RES) on the provider portal in the coming weeks. A big thank you to 65 institutions who participated in the RES during this busy period, we really value the feedback you provide.

Graduate Outcomes Survey – Longitudinal (GOS-L)

2024 GOS-L

Institutional data files for the 2024 GOS-L were released on Tuesday 18 June. If you have not yet downloaded your file, please email qilt@srcentre.com.au to request that they be re-uploaded. Please also ensure you download the latest GOS-L Tableau User Guide and GOS-L Data Dictionary from the provider portal to

accompany your institution's data. If you have yet to download the file, we will need to reupload it for you as it will have expired – please get in touch with us if this is the case. Thank you to the 124 participating institutions in the 2024 GOS-L.

Employer Satisfaction Survey (ESS)

2024 ESS

The 2024 ESS continues in field, and we have currently achieved over 2,000 surveys with supervisors of recent graduates. As we move into the last couple months of fieldwork, we will be running some additional engagement with supervisors to try and boost response to the survey.

Updated QILT Key Dates calendar

The revised version of the 2024 QILT Key Dates calendar is now available on the provider portal. Please ensure you save the latest copy of this document, either virtually or physically, within easy access as it provides essential information for the remainder of this year. Click [here](#) or log in to the provider portal and then click on Provider Resources.

August 2024 Updates

Student Experience Survey (SES)

2024 SES

The 2024 SES August collection launched two weeks ago. Thank you to all the institutions that provided feedback during the pre-fieldwork quality assurance checks. The survey launch has gone smoothly and early response to the survey has been strong. To date we have 141,873 technical completes at a response rate of 22.8%, which is just ahead of this time last year.

For institutions participating in the August collection, it is important to continue to promote the survey and build awareness of the survey among staff and students. Recommended response maximisation activities for this stage of the collection are detailed in the engagement activity plan in the Collection and Sample Guide (available to download on the provider portal).

A reminder to institutions that the SES 'Authentication' module is an effective and secure way for students to access the survey if they are unable to find their email invitation in their inbox. Please

refer to the July 2024 webinar slides on the Provider Portal for more information and details of the positive impact we saw in 2023 following improvements made to this pathway. Already this year, 3,357 students have authenticated by email and another 5,199 by SMS.

We will be sending quotes over the next week to August institutions who have opted-in to fee-for-service response maximisation activities (additional SMS, post-field telephone reminder calls). If you didn't opt-in via the participation form but are interested in undertaking these activities, please contact us via qilt@srcentre.com.au as soon as possible.

The 2024 SES September collection is scheduled to begin for 40 institutions from Tuesday 10 September. We will contact institutions ahead of launch when sample is available in the Reporting Module for review, and we recommend institutions conduct awareness activities ahead of and during launch week.

Graduate Outcomes Survey (GOS)

2024 GOS

Post-field data processing for the 2024 GOS is nearing completion. Institutions who participated in the 2024 GOS will receive institution data products on Friday 30 August.

The GOS Respondent Engagement Survey (RES) report is now available on the provider portal. A big thank you again to 65 institutions who participated in the RES during this busy period, we really value the feedback you provide.

2025 GOS

The 2025 GOS November collection is fast approaching, with the Collection and Sample Guide due to be sent on Monday 12 August. Please keep an eye out for this email as it will also include a link to the Participation and Additional Services Form, in which we ask institutions to confirm participation. Further information on the sampling process and timelines will be provided in the Collection and Sample Guide. If you have any queries about the upcoming GOS collection, please don't hesitate to get in touch via qilt@srcentre.com.au.

Employer Satisfaction Survey (ESS)

2024 ESS



August is the final month for the 2024 ESS fieldwork, and we have currently achieved over 3,000 surveys with supervisors of recent graduates. Follow-up with supervisors finishes this weekend.

Privacy Notice Census

The Australian Government Department of Education has commissioned the Social Research Centre to undertake a privacy notice census to understand consent provided by students, graduates and employers participating in the QILT suite of surveys.

A communique is available to download from the provider portal which provides further information related to the purpose of this census and the kinds of information we will require from institutions. We will provide additional details in future newsletters.

All QILT participating institutions will be required to respond to the census in September.

CAUDIT UPDATES

August 2024 Updates

CAUDIT formally commenced in 1976, and informally 10 years before. The initial bond was the IT community coming together to collaborate during the infancy of Information Technology. In these early days, the spirit of collaboration was paramount and this enduring commitment remains at the heart of CAUDIT.

This month, we celebrated this spirit at the inaugural CAUDIT Communities Conference, an event that perfectly embodied our theme: 'Sector Strong.' This theme reflects the foundational values of CAUDIT and our ongoing dedication to them.

Generously hosted by La Trobe University in Melbourne, the conference marked a significant milestone in convening all the CAUDIT Communities of Practice for the first time in person. The AeRO Forum was held as a distinct stream, further enriching the discourse.

While digital platforms have revolutionised connectivity, face-to-face interactions offer unparalleled opportunities for undistracted presence, meaningful connections, and the exchange of insights that digital forums often cannot match. The event was

bustling, chaotic, energising, and ultimately brilliant.

Our deepest gratitude goes to the delegates, Community Chairs, sponsors, speakers, and our hosts at La Trobe University, whose collective efforts made the conference a resounding success and reinforced our Sector Strong ethos.

During the conference dinner, we honoured those whose contributions have made a profound impact within our sector and beyond. The inaugural CAUDIT Community Award was presented to the Higher Education Reference Model (HERM), recognising both the collective dedication of its contributors and the exceptional individuals who have championed its development. We specifically acknowledged Mac Lemon and Galen White from FromHereOn, Jeff Kennedy from The University of Auckland, and Nigel Foxwell from James Cook University. Their unwavering commitment has been instrumental in the HERM's stewardship and evolution, demonstrating the model's substantial value, collaboration, and expertise.

The CAUDIT communities of Practice remain central to our mission, and through the collaboration and development of best practices taking place across our communities, together, we continue to build a stronger sector.

Greg Sawyer, CEO



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.



Some of you will remember Angel Calderon from RMIT University, for his keynote a few years ago. He has a very useful LinkedIn page where you can find lots of updates and opinions on Global Rankings.



SECTOR NEWS AND VIEWS

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

[Sector Fail In Explaining International Education](#) by Stephen Matchett. When a reporter asked Jason Clare if international student numbers came up in Labor Party research he replied, 'buggered if I know mate, I don't look at focus groups.'

But party comrades who do will be interested in a [survey](#) by the Australia-China Relations Institute (at UTS) which demonstrates why it is smart politics for the government to talk about student housing and announce it is cutting international enrolments.

For a start, 34 per cent of people surveyed 'strongly agree' that buyers from China drive up house prices and 24 per cent think Chinese investors 'negatively affected' residential rentals.

Overall, the survey demonstrates ordinary Australians are pragmatic, banking on the benefits of engaging with China in education, while recognising the risk. Thus 68 per cent of those surveyed consider Chinese students provide Australia with a big economic benefit and two thirds are ok with research ties. But 73 per cent think universities depend on them too much.

And after a generation of furrphies, 35 per cent of survey responders still think international students from China 'potentially' reduce the quality of university education and nearly half have a 'concern' that their presence means there are fewer places for locals. Plus, just under half think China ties can compromise freedom of speech on campus.



It all demonstrates the work universities should have done to explain international students as an unalloyed good for all Australians – and didn't. (Future Campus – 21 June)



IPA Attack Presents Gifts to Sector by Tim Winkler. Do communities really think that universities are bloated and in decline? If they listen to the Institute of Public Affairs, then it is possible that they do – but the latest attack on the sector actually represents a gift.

There is a worrying trend in public debate to assume that hastily constructed arguments cobbled together without evidence are an acceptable proxy for reality, if pedalled by the right person.

Hence when Federal Education Minister Jason Clare warned that universities were at risk of losing their social licence because they were enrolling too many international students, it was reported as fact, without a great deal of digging to understand whether that was true. We know there are surveys on which professions are most trusted, but actual market research into the sector's social licence? MIA.

Similarly, when Peter Dutton criticised the University of Sydney for making too much money by enrolling too many international students, nobody required an explanation as to how many students constitutes the Coalitions measure of 'too many' (nor why the party of free enterprise has a problem with accumulating cash, but that's a side issue in this discussion).

Hot on the heels of empty rhetoric dressed up as fact, the Institute of Public Affairs (IPA) has presented universities with a gift, by mounting an attack on university staffing; 'Universities Spend Billions Each Year To Not Teach Students.'

The IPA's media release has at least gone to the trouble of trotting out a couple of graphs to support their argument, but then get lost in a wave of shrill accusations based on misunderstandings of how the sector works.

The IPA's cutting-edge research looked at publicly available data on HE staffing published by the Federal Government to criticise the fact that 57% of all university

staff are classified as professional or non-academic.

However, the release then takes a bad turn, mistaking the antiquated dichotomy of professional vs academic staffing as a marker of unproductive vs productive, shrieking about 'bloated bureaucracy' 'the proliferation of work strategic commitments,' and 'a culture that is more interested in growing and sustaining a bureaucracy for its own benefit.'

'It can be no surprise that the teaching quality of Australia's top ranked universities is in decline when resources are disproportionately poured into administration over teaching and research,' the release says.

The fundamental problem here is the assumption that professional = hanger on/useless and academic = gilt edged productivity machine. Many have already written about the questionable relevance of this dichotomy, given the requirements for so many staff to exert their labours on both sides of the fence.

However, the attack is useful – to help understand the misconceptions held by others and also because it demonstrates the issues with continuing to persist with the antiquated professional/academic dichotomy. How should learning technologists be classified? What about experts in generative AI assessment security, or teaching methodology, or institutional positioning? Is it time to consider allowing more professional staff to lead institutions as VCs?

The sector criticism from both sides of politics and the IPA are a wakeup call to the sector. Bouquets of boosterism where institutions compete to tell the world how important they are to their communities are an unheard monologue that have defined sector positioning for decades.

Third party endorsement – where allies and even grudging adversaries speak up on your behalf – is comprehensively drowned out (when it exists) by community apathy or antipathy.

Until now, the sector has thrived despite governmental and community indifference and declining real funding streams because it has been able to make up the shortfall with international fees.

As Anthony Albanese and Peter Dutton fight for bragging rights on who can be tougher on migration, universities are left in a new world of increasing regulation,

no revenue parachute and no hint of communities marching in the streets to rally for their institutions.

Which means new political skills, but also new community engagement skills are needed – right now. The outlook for the sector doesn't have to be dire – it will only remain so if we cling to the models of the past. (Future Campus – 21 June)



The SA Government is ticking the scatola with \$1m over three years so Flinders U and Uni SA can keep teaching Italian and running study tours. Back in 2021 Flinders U wanted to drop the language because of a shortage of students. It gave up in the face of truly creative outrage, notably a petition claiming that cancelling the course in the 700th anniversary year of Dante Alighieri's death would demonstrate, 'a profound lack of respect for the Italian community.' But there still are not enough students and so the government has stepped in to 'support Italian language initiatives that deliver a positive impact and value to South Australia.' Cynics suggest there are 117,000 people in SA of Italian birth or family origin, a handy bloc in an election – but what can you expect from cynics? (Future Campus – 21 June)

Another university lobby opposes education ministers sticking bibs into the number of international students at each university, certainly at the course level. But Innovative Research Universities is happy for the all-but-universally-expected Australian Tertiary Education Commission to set international enrolments, as part of compact negotiations. Did it not occur to anybody that ministerial power to set numbers may have been floated so ATEC oversight appeared reasonable in comparison? That Education Minister Jason Clare has already described ministerial intervention on course numbers a 'reserve power' suggests that this is what the government had in mind. If so, it worked. (Future Campus – 21 June)

The end of days appears imminent for Uni Tasmania's plan to move just about everything into Hobart's CBD, by selling the existing Sandy Bay campus for housing. The State Government has tabled a bill requiring Parliament's approval for this to happen. 'This land was



originally gifted to Tasmanians for the purpose of education in 1951 and we are committed to ensuring the community has a voice in its future,' says Minister for a bunch of stuff, not including education, Madeleine Ogilvie – who sits for the division of Clark, which includes Sandy Bay. The university plan has been long and bitterly opposed by Sandy Bay locals and members of the university community. There is a consolation prize for university management, just not much of one – the State Government working with it, 'to secure federal funding for much-needed STEM upgrades.' These could be in the CBD where the university already has a substantial presence but more likely back at the Bay. If the upgrades occur at all – the Commonwealth may not be inclined to do anybody a favour to end a local brawl. Whatever happens, the university has an expensive potential problem – how to fund the city expansion without the Sandy Bay sale. (Future Campus – 21 June)

The Department of Education has a recruiter looking for a TEQSA chief commissioner, replacing Peter Coaldrake, whose departure was briefly, to the point of appearing churlish, announced last month by Education Minister Jason Clare.

Adrienne Nieuwenhuis is acting. The recruiter is also advertising for TEQSA commissioners (plural). One commission position might be that now filled by Joan Cooper, whose five-year term ended in April but who is staying on for up to a year, 'to ensure the continuity of the Commission while recruitment for a new Chief Commissioner takes place.' Another Commissioner would be needed if Ms Nieuwenhuis is confirmed in the chair. Who knows if applicants will be put off by ambiguity about what TEQSA will do next, what with the imminence of the Australian Tertiary Education Commission. The job advert does not ask for 'demonstrable skills in bureaucratic border wars' but having them won't hurt. (Future Campus – 21 June)

Universities came in useful on Monday when the government needed an announcement about the PM's meeting with Chinese premier Li Qiang, when there was nothing much to announce. And so, an MOU in Education and Research Cooperation, sufficed. It will, 'encourage further cooperation in areas such as quality assurance, online education, and qualification recognition.' Details of the MOU did not make the cut

for the two joint statements from the PM and premier. (Future Campus – 21 June)

Swinburne U renews its partnership with Richmond Football Club, until 2028 ('at least'). The university announcement details research and student placements as examples of why the formal partnership, now in place since 2017, is good for the university. But as to what it costs, Swinburne is silent. Perhaps the sponsorship is included in the \$9.9m listed in the university's 2023 consolidated accounts for 'advertising, marketing and promotional expenses.' Or perhaps not. (Future Campus – 21 June)

Prospective students are passionate about study, when they aren't being pragmatic. The 2024 student survey from the (NSW and ACT) Universities Admissions Centre found the subject they are interested in matters most to 80 per cent. However, 64 per cent rate graduate jobs, up 20 per cent on 2022. And nobody much (21 per cent) cares about 'world university rankings.' Not that they aren't interested in institutional reputations, they are just pragmatic about them – it rates just about equal fourth on campus selection, with 'transport and commute times'. As to what they expect on campus, free Wi-Fi is first (84 per cent), followed by 24/seven facilities, free/low-cost food, cheap gyms, communal space and low-cost parking. Pragmatic with bells-on, are the young. And for universities that tick all those boxes, on-line is the way to reach young people in the market for a campus. Instagram, YouTube and TikTok are the preferred platforms. As for pitching universities being the places to learn how to change the world – just a third look at news sites. A vox pop in the report states, 'I don't watch the news. I don't need to hear about the negativity in the world.' (Future Campus – 21 June)

ATEC the Enforcer by Stephen Matchett. Australia's universities will be regulated by a central authority, charged with, 'meeting national objectives set by the government.'

The plan for the Australian Tertiary Education Commission, released Friday, is based on core proposals of the Universities Accord inquiry and extends government control over enrolments, way beyond authority over international student numbers already announced.

The domestic model, discussed in two new proposed policy papers, empowers government to set national numbers of Australian undergraduates. ATEC will set

a hard cap, for each university and other HE providers, according to 'a managed growth' target. The Commission will do the 'managing' with no government funding, or student fees, funded by HECS-HELP, going to institutions enrolling students above an approved quota. Public universities will be able to move funded places between courses, 'to meet the demand from students and industry.' However, changes would be monitored (presumably by ATEC) 'to manage shifts that do not align with national priorities and university missions.'

ATEC's authority will also extend to:

- targets for Indigenous and equity enrolments
- advising government on 'efficient prices' for courses
- managing accountability for public funding
- 'foster' greater alignment between HE and VET
- 'steward' HE 'through disruptions or crises'

The two papers on what ATEC will do are badged 'implementation consultation proposals' but they read like settled policy. Anybody with ideas need to be quick, 'feedback' is required by July 26.

A point picked up by Universities Australia chief Luke Sheehy. 'Disappointingly, the Department has not established a formal consultation process for either piece of work beyond inviting stakeholder feedback,' he writes.

'We will be seeking to remedy that, given the significance of these reforms to the future of our sector. I think it would be very useful for department officials to, at least, engage directly with us on the design of these initiatives and I will be advocating for as much.'

UA will need to be quick, July 26 is the deadline for 'feedback.' (Future Campus – 24 June)



Uncertain Future for Equity Students by Tim Winkler. In February, the Accord's Final Report was lauded for making underrepresented students the enrolment priority for the future of Australian tertiary education.

Four out of every five Australians in a job would have a TAFE qualification or a degree by 2050, leading to around an



extra one million students enrolled in post-school education.

The question then – and even more so now – is how the government would transform access and fund new places.

The Federal Government's proposal on Managed Growth Funding, released Friday, contains a detailed manifesto for a new, simplified funding system and outlines how equity students will be financed.

The proposal seeks to:

- Provide sufficient funding for the Accord's proposed enrolment growth
- Reduces complexity
- Effectively prevent institutions from enrolling domestic students above their Government-controlled cap.

The concept of a new bureaucracy effectively and efficiently allocating caps tests credulity, and the elimination of capacity to over-enrol raises numerous issues; but when the paper turns to funding equity students, the plan appears to head even deeper into troubled territory.

Part of the problem here is a really basic failure to shape a system through the needs of potential students and instead plump for a top-down command and control approach, believing that disadvantaged students will hungrily snap up places allocated to them, wherever those places are, and ATEC knows what is best for them.

It's a system designed by people who are not trying to work out how they will pay to fill the car up or unable to conceive of paying to rent student accommodation while their family are struggling to stay afloat.

The paper outlines how the Government proposes to manage funding for each institution by setting a hard enrolment cap, preventing them from over-enrolling.

There will be ongoing funding for Indigenous students enrolling in any Bachelor degree, which will spark even greater competition between institutions to grow their Indigenous cohorts, as they can grow Indigenous student numbers above the hard student number cap.

However, the other underrepresented, or equity groups identified by the Accord – low SES, rural and regional and students with disability – do not get demand-

driven funding and therefore are simply included in the institution's new cap.

Given the increased costs of recruiting and supporting students from equity backgrounds, there would be no incentive for institutions to recruit increasing numbers of equity students.

Equity students would only be allocated a place if successful in meeting entrance standards for their preferred institutions and otherwise would be allocated a place in another university in their area. However, if all institutions have exhausted their cap allocations, they then need to go back to ATEC and hope that more places might be doled out.

There are many cases where this simply isn't going to work. A student with a disability who can only easily access a nearby campus. A student in a far-flung regional area who can only afford a bus to the university. A stratification between high status universities that can fill their caps without equity students and low status universities that will have higher costs and lower completion rates because they are forced to fill up with equity students.

More work will be required if the Accord's vision is to have a chance of success. (Future Campus – 24 June)



Flinders Reveals its Own Colombo Plans by Stephen Matchett. Flinders U is close to an agreement for a Sri Lanka campus, with Vice-Chancellor Colin Stirling in-country last week for 'final discussions' with President Ranil Wickremesinghe.

In a brief statement Tuesday, the university confirmed 'it is proud to progress the opportunity to establish a campus' in Sri Lanka and is 'well positioned to help meet future workforce needs in areas such as IT, engineering, business and medicine.' The university's existing engagement with Sri Lanka is limited to pathway programs with three providers in IT, business, medical sciences and psychology.

Flinders follows Edith Cowan, already open in Colombo, offering complete courses in-country or transferring to Perth for second and subsequent years. ECU Sri Lanka degrees include IT, business and nursing. Unit costs are around A\$730.

Flinders' move appears to be part of its response to the merger, now underway, of Uni Adelaide and Uni SA, which is the result of a State Government push. Premier Peter Malinauskas has long argued that a big South Australian university will have the research mass to rise in international rankings, which will attract many more international students.

While Flinders U has never commented on any approach to be part of the merged institution, it is now positioning itself as an independent brand in the city, with a new office-tower campus in the Adelaide CBD, close to locations of the giant Adelaide University that starts teaching in 2026. And now Flinders appears intent on eating the Sri Lankan course of its competitor's international education lunch.

Flinders' offshore expansion follows Deakin U and Uni Wollongong which are opening in India, also in a 'special zone' in Gujarat state. Monash U has recently established a campus in Jakarta, teaching English language and postgraduate courses and Western Sydney U is about to open in Indonesia in Surabaya, East Java. (Future Campus – 26 June)



News Nightmare: Staying Informed is Lowest Priority for Years 12s by Tim Winkler.

In news that strikes a dagger at the heart of journalists everywhere, just 5% of Year 12's rated 'staying informed' as something that mattered most to them – with recycling (6%) and animal rights (12%) only slightly higher.

UAC continue to dredge data from year 12's eager to win a place at university or TAFE next year and have released a host of insights into student life in [their latest report](#) – including what matters most to students.

Supporting my family (42% of Year 12's), Affordable housing/rent (33%) and Job Security (29%) were the three things that mattered most to those interviewed.

The survey of more than 16,700 Australian Year 12 students also found that:

- 42% are worried AI will surpass human intelligence
- 79% were intending to pursue tertiary studies. Whether this number is influenced by the willingness of those not intending to study to chat to UAC is unclear.



- Just 2% of students never feel stressed, with the majority feeling stressed for 50% or more of their life
- 61% will tell family and friends after having a bad customer experience (best foot forward on Open Day please team!)
- 18% wanted access to prayer rooms on campus
- 29% of students considered global rankings when choosing their institution (a 3% increase on 2023) – bad news for institutions that have just hit their rankings peak
- 57% consider campus culture and 'vibe' when choosing institutions, with courses on offer the most important factor (71%)
- 91% of students try to save money each week, and there is great enthusiasm for bargains/ discounts
- 72% of students rely on social media for news and just 7% read printed newspapers.
- 47% of students exercise 1-2 days or less per week, with walking by far the most popular form of exertion

If you want to know more, don't ask your call centre to follow up. 2% say they want to be contacted by direct message and just 4% would like to converse with you over the phone. Email is by far the preferred contact method (until they get into uni and suddenly stop reading them). (Future Campus – 28 June)



Jason Clare was talking to the Committee for Economic Development of Australia yesterday, focusing on expanding numbers of students from disadvantaged backgrounds in HE and giving them the support they need for study. He referred to Manning Clark's division of Australia into 'straighteners and enlargers' adding that Labor is the latter. One thing the Government is certainly enlarging is government authority over university operations. Frank Larkins and Ian Marshman set out what ATEC will do in Future Campus on Monday. (Future Campus – 28 June)

Flinders U VC Colin Stirling appears to share not in the Hanrahan about international ed being ruined before the year is out, by Minister Clare's proposed caps on student numbers. Professor Stirling is on the board of IDP and has just bought on market \$49,800 worth of shares in it. (Future Campus – 28 June)

The National Tertiary Education Union and its pals in the papers are campaigning, again, against universities not paying staff what enterprise agreements specify. The comrades are calling for a Parliamentary Inquiry and Labor Senator for NSW Tony Sheldon tweets, 'university executives need to be held accountable for this industrial-scale wage theft.' That will be the Tony Sheldon who chairs the Education and Employment Legislation Committee and is the deputy chair of the Education and Employment References Committee. (Future Campus – 28 June)

The Feds are recruiting for a new Chief Scientist. Incumbent Cathy Foley leaves at year end.

She was reappointed for 12 months, last December, at the end of her first three-year term. The advert emphasises that this is a job for somebody who understands Ministers and mandarins and 'how to operate effectively within a public sector context.' However, after the huge achievement of entrepreneur Alan Finkle, who served two terms before Dr Foley, there appears to be a room for another of his ilk, with a reference to the career of the 'ideal candidate,' spanning academia and industry.' (Future Campus – 28 June)

The gloom in Uni Tasmania's newly released 2023 Annual Report starts with the VC's introduction. 'In every corner of the planet, we are confronted by a growing ecological and climate crisis, rising inequality, and increasing instability. These challenges come at a time when we face the headwinds of an ageing population, slowing productivity growth, rising costs of living, and global tensions,' Rufus Black writes. And that's without the endless campaign by Hobart activists who now look closer to achieving their goal – blocking the University's plan to sell off the Sandy Bay campus to fund an in-progress move to the CBD. Unless the VC is informed by ordinary financials. The consolidated accounts report revenue down a bit (\$10m) on 2022, but \$100m down on 2021. Costs were up nearly \$44m on 2021 to \$770m with most of the increase due to a \$28m increase in employee expenses. On 'core activities,' the university's financial 'focus,' it lost nearly \$54m last year, three-times the 2022 loss. The university is also nudging its State Government-set \$400m borrowing limit with \$356m in debt. (Future Campus – 28 June)

The long march to a med school continues at CQU with its existing 'regional medical pathway' renewed for

five years. It is a partnership with Uni Queensland and the local state hospital system, which consists of a three-year pre-med degree at CQU followed by a four-year Uni Queensland med course. The whole program is offered at both Bundaberg and Rockhampton. The first starters move from CQU to Uni Queensland next year. It's another stage in a process that then CQU VC Scott Bowman started in 2018 with a campaign for a med school in Rockhampton. CQU says half the current intake are locals who do not have to leave home to study medicine. (Future Campus – 28 June)

The ATEC Time Machine: Re-Regulating Universities Takes Us Back to the '90s by Frank Larkins and Ian Marshman.

The Australian Government consultation paper regarding the establishment of the Australian Tertiary Education Commission proposes a body that 'will bring direction, cohesion and stability to policy making and it will have the capacity to drive reforms over the long term.'

There will be four Commissioners, including one First Nations Commissioner, and a Chief Executive Officer. They will have powers to consult widely and be at arms-length from the higher education sector. While strong and independent leadership is proposed, the Commission will be housed in the Department of Education and leverage department resources to minimise establishment and operational costs. Reporting to Parliament will be through the Secretary of the Department as the accountability authority. The Minister of Education is expected to have statutory powers to direct the ATEC.

These operational arrangements raise the important question as to how independent the ATEC decision-making will be from the daily operations of the Department and what will be the respective roles of each body.

ATEC has a far-reaching reform agenda:

- implementing managed growth funding for universities
- implementing needs-based funding for underrepresented cohorts, and
- preparing the HE sector for improved harmonisation, including involvement with the Vocational Education and Training sector.

The consultation paper introduces new terminology that potentially raises warning flags for Australia's universities. 'Stewardship', 'tertiary harmonisation' and higher education 'system



improvements' are all loaded terms, the beauty and scope of which will be in the hands of the Commissioners. The early years of the Tertiary Education Quality and Standards Agency, which over-reached its brief, is a case in point.

The paper lists at length the Commission's various functions. These range from administering funding for higher education teaching and research programs, through to delivering new higher education quality metrics and data functionality.

One is left to ponder whether, in pursuing the goal of achieving stronger governance, rigour and oversight of public funding in higher education, any consideration has been given to the current standing of Australian universities, the impact on the autonomy of university decision-making and the risk of burdening universities with excessive reporting and process compliance. Viewed globally, Australian universities punch significantly above their weight, both individually and as a sector. There is no mention in the consultation paper about the need to respect established university decision-making processes or for a genuinely needs-based and proportionate approach to reporting and stewardship of the sector.

What is proposed comes at a time when world-wide rankings of Australian universities have never been higher and when less than 50 percent of the annual income of most universities comes from government.

It is planned for ATEC to influence and inform a wide range of activities pertaining to the governance and management of universities. These include their performance and quality, managing international student profiles, advising on and monitoring tertiary educational targets.

Crucially, ATEC will implement enforceable mission-based compacts with HE providers by administering government funding for higher education teaching and research programmes to manage growth and needs-based funding. The document refers to managing educational and research programs and for ATEC to provide advice to government on HE pricing. It will review universities' strategic goals and missions, including inter alia estimates of student load across both domestic and international funding clusters. The increased workload and compliance costs to universities will be significant.

On the systems improvement front, ATEC's role in part is to: foster greater tertiary alignment between higher education and VET sectors; establish a pricing framework for estimating the cost of higher education; steward the sector through future disruptions and crises such as COVID and the emergence of AI; and improve the quality and reputation of Australian higher education.

Each of these is a lofty and immensely challenging aspiration. Some are legacy projects repeatedly attempted but never really delivered. Others assume that a small national entity will have superior understanding as to how to chart unknown or inhospitable waters.

In reading the consultation paper it is hard for retired senior executives such as ourselves not to see themes reminiscent of the Commonwealth Tertiary Education Commission 1977-88 and its successor, the National Board of Employment, Education and Training and its Higher Education Council. The 1990's was the era of detailed education profiles, often involving extended contests over a small number of funded places and extensive reporting measured at that time in metres rather than megabits. It was also a period when Education Department executives, buoyed by the presence of HEC business representatives, referenced their roles as oversight of the 'University of Australia'.

It is instructive to recall that it was only after the collapse of that era of 'stewardship' and increasing levels of deregulation were condoned that Australian universities were able to frame their expectations against genuinely international benchmarks and deliver the outstanding global rankings they presently enjoy. They have experienced two decades of exceptional overseas student growth, attracted outstanding world-class staff and conducted highly successful fundraising campaigns among other initiatives.

In responding to the consultation paper and the expectations prescribed for ATEC, Australian universities might be encouraged to contrast the costs and benefits of previous whole-of-system frameworks with the outcomes that high levels of institutional autonomy continue to deliver.

Those ultimately accountable for designing the ATEC legislation might also be encouraged to set achievable expectations, reflect on why earlier models proved ultimately unviable and be mindful of how much central

'stewardship' has contributed to today's truly world-class Australian university sector.

Frank Larkins and Ian Marshman are Honorary Fellows at the University of Melbourne Centre for the Study of Higher Education. Frank Larkins was Deputy Vice Chancellor at the University of Melbourne from 1991 to 2008. Ian Marshman was Academic Registrar and Senior Vice Principal at the University of Melbourne from 1990 to 2015. (Future Campus – 1 July)



[Research Misconduct Cases Fair Game for Fair Work Commission](#) by **Stephen Matchett**. A Federal Court ruling sets out why the Fair Work Commission can make assessments on research misconduct.

Monash U investigated plagiarism allegations against biologist Padma Murthi, who went to the Fair Work Commission. She complained that the process, under the university's research code, breached the Monash U enterprise agreement.

The university responded by going to the Federal Court arguing that this had nothing to do with the FWC because the university's enterprise agreement covers only the process and outcomes of an investigation not conclusions, which are for experts 'operating in line' with the national research misconduct code.

To which Justice Anthony Wheelahan responds, the FWC has the authority to make findings on whether plagiarism had occurred 'as a step along the way' to make an order as to the operation of the university agreement.

'While the University is indeed invested with the responsibility to investigate allegations in line with the Research Code, nothing in (Enterprise Agreement) clauses 58–62 has the effect that the Commission is precluded from looking at the merits of such allegations for its own purpose, which is to deal with a dispute,' he states.

And even if the FWC cannot determine whether plagiarism occurred, the merits of an allegation that it had, 'could be material' to arguments whether or not the enterprise agreement was breached.

'Dr Murthi's complaint includes that her reputation has been besmirched by a



wrong finding. ... One can readily understand why Dr Murthi would seek, as part of her remedy, the vindication of the Commission formally expressing its own view that she has not engaged in plagiarism,' Justice Wheelahan adds.

This is not great for university managements that prefer managing their own inquiries and making their own judgements on research misconduct matters.

Which is what they do now. The Australian Research Integrity Committee does not investigate evidence in misconduct cases but examines how institutions conduct them. Its most stringent response is to ask a university to have another go at an inquiry.

The possibility of the FWC assessing research misconduct matters won't satisfy campaigners for an independent research integrity agency but it could create an appeals mechanism for aggrieved researchers. (Future Campus – 3 July)



Government Plays Politics with 100 Per Cent Visa Fee Increase by Stephen Matchett.

The Government outflanks the international education establishment by presenting a 100 per cent plus hike in the student visa application fee as an equity measure.

On Monday morning ministers announced, effective immediately, the student visa was \$1400, up from \$710.

'This increase reflects the increasing value of education in Australia and reflects the Albanese Government's commitment to restoring integrity in the international education sector,' is the pitch. However, the announcement also includes messages for voters who see international education as a synonym for immigration.

'When we came to government, we inherited a migration system that was broken and dysfunctional, and an international education system which was being compromised by rorts and exploitation,' is the lead quote from Home Affairs Minister Claire O'Neil.

Complaints from the international education establishment, via their proxies in the press, were loud within an hour but the Education Minister ensured they would be widely discounted as interest-

group pleading, by presenting the increased fee as an equity initiative.

'These changes will strengthen integrity in the international education system and help to fund important reforms recommended by the Universities Accord, including making HECS fairer, paid prac and expanding FEE-Free Uni Ready courses,' Mr Clare stated.

The visa hike is another in a series of measures by the government that present international education as a migration pathway that needs narrowing.

A couple of weeks back Mr Clare was asked on Sky News whether international student numbers come up in Labor Party research. He replied, 'buggered if I know mate, I don't look at focus groups.'

Monday's announcement appears to indicate somebody does. (Future Campus – 3 July)

Struggling International Students Left in the Lurch by Stephen Matchett.

Research reveals that even when universities can point to strategies on helping international students with mental health needs individuals are generally on their own.

Michelle Peterie (Uni Sydney) and colleagues* investigated universities to find that when they do have support strategies, they frame mental ill-health as a problem for individuals rather than a consequence of 'dispersed issues,' such as 'housing insecurity, workforce exploitation, academic stress and 'precarious belonging.' And the government does not require them to do anything more.

To ascertain what the 37 public universities do on international students' mental ill-health the authors reviewed all their websites.

They found 17 institutions with 'no identified public mental health strategies,' at all including international education giant Uni Melbourne. Nine have public mental health strategies but with no international-related content. Eight had 'superficial' international coverage.

'While some universities may have had such strategies internally available, this lack of transparent institutional action is notable, suggesting a weaker public commitment to international students' mental health. Accountability is diminished when strategies are not

available for public scrutiny,' Dr Peterie and colleagues write.

Only three have substantial content for international students, Central Queensland U, Uni Sydney and Victoria U.

The authors analysed their policies, to find, 'at least some acknowledgement ... that the challenges international students face in Australia are often not of their own making, or, at a minimum, do not exclusively arise from individual vulnerabilities.'

However, they all, 'framed mental ill-health as a problem that could and should be managed (at least in part) at the individual level.'

And the three ducked the university's role in problems people were having. 'a noticeable silence across all strategies concerned the role of exploitative recruitment processes in contributing to academic stress. ... While all strategies underlined the need to reduce pressure on students struggling with the demands of their courses, none questioned whether their own pursuit of international student 'market share' was setting some students up to fail.'

Overall, the authors argue, the focus on individuals dealing with difficulties, 'is consistent with the neoliberal logics that structure the contemporary university. It does not, however, sit comfortably with social science understandings of how health and well-being are produced and unravelled.'

Which means they are ducking responsibilities, 'While universities may be charged with providing basic resources—such as green spaces, nutritious food and housing information—to enable student-consumers to pursue health and self-fulfilment, more fundamental questions about universities' responsibilities vis-à-vis combatting exploitation, racism and poverty (among other issues) remain largely unacknowledged and unaddressed within these policies.' (Future Campus – 5 July)



Monash U announces staff have and students will get, access to Microsoft Copilot,

'your everyday AI companion.' It's a standard statement that communicates no enthusiasm for what is to come – perhaps because a disclosure adds Copilot was used in the writing with



output, 'modified to better represent the Monash tone of voice.' Imagine the prompt; 'you are an official who does not want a memo to encourage wonder and joy for the university's future.' (Future Campus – 5 July)

A need for caps on international student numbers as explained by Agriculture Minister Murray Watt, (representing Jason Clare) Senate Question Time, Tuesday). 'We have seen a massive growth in international education over the last couple of years in Australia, and that is putting unsustainable pressure on the amount of migration that we are receiving in this country at a time when people are experiencing cost-of-living pressures and very real housing pressures.' Senator Watt continued at length on how the Government would do an even better job on housing if it was not for the Greens. (Future Campus – 5 July)

At Monash U a staff member went to the Fair Work Commission claiming a breach of the university enterprise agreement in the way the university managed a research plagiarism allegation against her. Monash responded with a Federal Court action claiming the FWC did not have jurisdiction – the court decided the commission did (Future Campus, July 2). This is said to have so alarmed the Australian Higher Education Industrial Association that it is briefing members that they will need to manage research misconduct inquiries so that they can convince the commission. For DVCs, who now only have to deal with external oversight by the far-from-powerful Australian Research Integrity Committee this will not be welcome. Not least because it could mean the FWC making decisions in evidence fabrication matters – requiring way more scientific knowledge than identifying plagiarism. Of course. Monash U could successfully appeal but observers warn against wagering the last petri dish on it, that Justice Wheelan's Federal Court judgement is closely argued indeed. (Future Campus – 5 July)

Uni Tasmania is copping a double whammy in state parliament. Whammy One is the bill requiring parliament's approval for the university to sell off most of the Sandy Bay campus to fund the in-progress move to Hobart CBD. Whammy Two is the re-establishment of the Legislative Council select committee inquiry into the 'provisions' of the university's governing act of parliament. The committee had to be re-established because parliament was prorogued for the lower house election, in March. The

new chair is Independent MLC Meg Webb. Both bill and committee report could be body-slams for university management. Apart from an intrusion into the university's autonomy, blocking the Sandy Bay sale will make funding the complete city move as originally planned somewhere between unlikely and impossible. And a critical Legislative Council committee report could well be a read by opponents of university management as an expression of no-confidence in VC Rufus Black. (Future Campus – 5 July)

Solidarity isn't forever in work for the merger of Uni Adelaide and Uni SA, to become Adelaide U, for the union isn't strong on all the details. National Tertiary Education Union state secretary Andrew Miller writes to Premier Peter Malinauskas pointing to commitments to 'co-creation' of the new university, including 'staff, students and stakeholders.' 'That means activating and including the wisdom and expertise of its people, not just its managers and external consultants, he says. In particular, Dr Miller and colleagues are upset by the merger team deciding Adelaide U will have a trimester teaching year, which staff of the two existing unis oppose by large majorities and state were not consulted about. (Future Campus – 5 July)

Universities are still exempt from last year's legislation requiring employers to offer people a permanent position after two consecutive fixed-term contracts. The first six-month exemption was to give managements' Higher Education Industrial Association and the National Tertiary Education Union time to work on how to apply the law in universities. They are still working on ways to do it, the problem is aligning the law with the HE industrial award and university enterprise agreements and now there is a second extension to New Year's Day, 2025. (Future Campus – 5 July)

Nearly 60 La Trobe U (mainly) staff and students want its name to change, 'due to the role played by the Institution's namesake, Charles La Trobe in the colonisation of Victoria.' They make their case in a substantial submission to the Victorian Government's Yoorrook Justice Commission, which is a 'formal truth-telling process into historical and ongoing injustices experienced by First Peoples in Victoria.' There have also been calls for Deakin U to change its name, what with Prime Minister Alfred Deakin being an architect of the White Australia policy. As for Melbourne U it is named for the second Viscount Melbourne, British

PM in the 1830s. He does not appear to have given Australia a thought but was previously a minister for another colony, Ireland, where he upset tenant farmers. Even so, FC's bet is that the first change will be the University of Naarm – Melbourne. (Future Campus – 5 July)

There is admirable optimism in university proposals that the government delays capping international enrolments until the Australian Tertiary Education Commission is in place to negotiate compacts with individual universities. 'Managed growth in international education must be seen as an integrated part of long-term planning and strategy, agreed between universities and the new ATEC,' as the Innovative Research Universities group put it in their submission to the Senate inquiry on the bill that includes the cap power. This assumes ATEC will understand university circumstances and consider management wish lists as important proposals from valued partners. Undoubtedly the first will occur. As to the second, it is not completely inconceivable. (Future Campus – 6 July)

Why Jason Clare will get his International Student Caps by Stephen Matchett. Universities opposing Federal Government caps on international student numbers appear to have been definitively defeated.

Speaking in Parliament last week, Education Minister Jason Clare demonstrated why resistance is futile.

Mr Clare responded to concerns from Helen Haines, the independent member for the regional Victorian seat of Indi in Question Time. Why, she asked will the Government cut international student numbers when regional universities rely on the revenue they generate to, 'educate the nurses, and doctors of the future.' The Minister did not point out that the Commonwealth funds student places for these professions and welcomed the question. Perhaps because it gave him an opportunity to expand on points he had discussed in the previous day's meeting with Dr Haines.

He certainly took the opportunity to repeat the Government's oft-announced reason for the caps, that it will deal 'shonks' in the system – which seemed strange in an answer focused on universities, what with this being far more of a recognised problem in VET than HE.



Mr Clare also pointed to 'positive comments' about the caps from La Trobe U, which has a campus on Dr Haines' patch, plus the Australian Technology Network, has 'indicated its support.' Mr Clare added Uni Queensland Chancellor Peter Varghese, 'a man who has the respect I think of all members of this House' had made supportive comments.

But if there are problems with the Bill, 'I am keen to work with you and I'm keen to work with Senators on this Bill to make sure that we get it right and make sure, for our universities and our other tertiary education providers who educate not just Australians but people from overseas, that we set this important industry up for the future.'

And he will too. When Mr Husic ended up with carriage of the legislation flowing from Industry Minister's inept idea for a student entrepreneur start-up year, he supported a Senate committee having a look. If, as seems certain, a Senate committee looks at the international cap Bill, Mr Clare will probably agree to changes if only to address technical failings raised by government agencies.

But even if amended, the Bill will pass. University lobbies are divided, cancelling each other out and Mr Clare makes an effectively unchallenged case that his reforms are needed to protect the quality of international students, which will play better to his base than a dog-whistle to appeal to voters who think international students make a housing shortage. And it won't be loudly opposed from the Opposition in the Senate, given Mr Dutton's commitments to cut even further. (Future Campus – 10 July)



More Men, Way More Research, More Money by Stephen Matchett. Isabelle Kingsley and colleagues [modelled](#) 46,912 Australian Research Council and National Health and Medical Research Council grant awards over 20 years to find overall success rates did not differ according to gender but reflected workforce participation. Nor was there a gender-based split on grant amounts.

The overall pattern applied across disciplines – with proportionally fewer grants going to teams with women chief investigators in a range of STEM fields, in line with workforce participation and application.

Specific findings include:

A trend towards parity over time at all seniority levels. At doctoral level, the success rate for women-led grants was 29 per cent in 2000 and 42 per cent in 2020. Among professors, the shift was from 14 per cent to 30 per cent.

Women Chief Investigators (CI's) had 'roughly' the same success rates, with variations over time and by discipline.

Grants relative to workforce participation were at the same rate at doctoral level (one per year for men and women); but for full professors, it was eight per year for women and five for men – however it is likely that disparities in award rates favouring women is due to fewer of them in the workforce.

Funding for CI's at an academic level was the same for both genders. However more men, especially at senior ranks meant grant teams led by women received \$11.6bn less across the study period.

The take-away: 'observed gender differences in awarded Australian competitive research grants mirror unequal workforce participation. Fewer women in the research workforce and leading grant applications likely result in fewer awarded grants led by women than by men. This pattern emerges despite a disparity in award rates favouring women. ... To resolve these gender differences, women's entry and, more critically, retention, and progression in the research workforce need to be addressed.'

Across the 20 years, notable gender success rates for women (rounded) by discipline include

- Ag/vet science: 20 per cent
- Chemistry: 15 per cent
- Education: 51 per cent
- Engineering: 16 per cent
- History/archaeology: 44 per cent
- ICT: 20 per cent
- Law: 51 per cent
- Maths: 16 per cent
- Medicine: 36 per cent
- Philosophy: 27 per cent
- Physical sciences: 15 per cent
- Human society: 45 per cent
- Technology: 18 per cent (Future Campus – 10 July)



US Confidence in HE Plummeted by Tim Winkler. Confidence in Higher Education has plummeted almost 20% over the past 9 years in the US, according to a new poll.

In 2015, 57% of Americans surveyed in the Gallup-Lumina Poll said they had high confidence in higher education, while 11% had little or no confidence – but this had dropped to 36% with high confidence and 32% with little or no confidence when the survey was repeated this year.

The research found a strong correlation between political affiliation and HE affection, with those in the little or no confidence bracket rising from 11% to 50% over the past nine years.

Given the Australian Government's concerns that HE institutions were jeopardising their social licence by enrolling too many international students, university and TAFE leaders would no doubt be interested to see whether similar attitudes towards tertiary education prevail here.

The US survey found that those that valued HE did so because they believed in the importance of education and good quality tuition. International student concerns did not appear among the beefs of those who didn't value HE, with concerns about political agendas, not teaching the 'right' things and cost topping the list of concerns. (Future Campus – 12 July)

[If the TEQSA team ever feels sorry for itself they should consider what training regulator ASQA announces it is up against](#) (new regulatory risk priorities).

'Serious and organised criminals operating through the sector create unfair competition for legitimate VET businesses and industries, exploit vulnerable people, and increase pressure on the economy through undermining immigration systems, and enable unqualified people entry into critical roles putting themselves, workplaces and the community at risk.' (Future Campus – 12 July)

[As of the year to April, there were 780,000 international students in the country, 16 per cent up on pre-COVID April 2019.](#) Commencements were a record 259,000. HE enrolments were up 9 per cent with VET 46 per cent higher. Which raises two questions, one is why is the government focusing the reasons for caps on HE when growth is in VET? The other is, does anybody seriously think ministers would gift the Opposition the chance to make this an issue during a



housing shortage? (Future Campus – 12 July)

The Australian Bureau of Stats compiles current data across its collection to report that 49,000 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people were in post-school education in 2021. Close to 43 per cent were in HE, nearly 10 per cent up on 2001 and 43 per cent in training, down from 56 per cent. (Sorry, no idea where the others are). The gender split for higher education is 67 per cent female, 33 per cent male. But not all the good news is that great. While Certificate III completers more than doubled over twenty years, to 24 per cent, people with PG degrees increased from 0.4 per cent of the total population, to 1.5 per cent in 2021. The ABS does not include comparative data for other Australians. (Future Campus – 12 July)

Across the ditch, the NZ Employment Court finds University of Auckland breached express and implied contractual obligations to protect microbiologist Siouxi Wiles' health and safety. Aspro Wiles was a prominent media commentator during the pandemic who was subjected to (hair-raising on FC's reading) public harassment. And university management was not exactly solid in supporting her public service as a scientist. 'The university now accepts that the commentary undertaken by Associate Professor Wiles was part of her work for the university. Simply telling her and her colleagues they should stop doing it was not reasonable. Again, the university should have been putting in place a proper strategy so that the affected academic staff were sufficiently supported to continue with their public activities on the pandemic,' the Court finds. (Future Campus – 12 July)

The Productivity Commission will make Jason Clare's day, with a set of stats on degrees driving social mobility. A new PC report states an undergraduate degree or higher delivers 23 per cent more lifetime pay than an HSC and 35 per cent more than people who only make it to Y11, or below. Australians whose education stops at Y12 are twice as likely as graduates to be in the bottom 20 per cent of income ten years later. 'Education provides people from all backgrounds with the means to improve their earning potential: in the context of having a 'fair go', accessible education provides significant opportunities to transform an individual's economic wellbeing,' is the message. But Brendan O'Connor may not be as pleased; 'training' appears only in the bibliography. (Future Campus – 12 July)

The Australian National Audit will run its unforgiving eyes over two Department of Education functions.

One is administration of the National Collaborative Research Infrastructure Strategy. The other is administration of HE funding, 'including gaining assurance that funding is spent in accordance with legislation, and measuring the impact of funding.' (Future Campus – 12 July)

Calls to change La Trobe U's name to something that does not honour a colonial settler must give student recruiters alpha irritants, what with the name change potentially jeopardising decades of decades of brand-recognition investment (FC July 5). Smart universities already have a solution. It seems that so far Macquarie U has escaped demands that it change its name, honouring a British governor of NSW (1810-21) which is surely as peak settler-colonist as can be. Perhaps this is because university management in 2022 named its main campus Wallumattagal, to recognise the First Nations people who originally lived there. James Cook U has done something similar – naming the Townsville campus Bebegu Yumba, (place of learning in the Birri-Gubba language). (Future Campus – 12 July)



Regional Campuses Win in Needs Based Funding Plan by Tim Winkler. Needs-based funding will follow low-SES students, Indigenous students and students with a disability, but not country students – instead funnelling the extra support money to regional and remote campuses, according to a new Government plan.

The Government's plans for needs-based funding, with additional revenue to support students from under-represented groups have **been released for consultation,** with responses due by 9 Aug – adding to the flurry of hasty consultation already underway in relation to the structure of the new ATEC and the Managed Growth Funding System (with responses for those two discussion papers due on 26 July).

The plan is to replace other programs providing support to under-represented students at each institution with a new program attaching money to student enrolments – so that institutions with greater numbers of students from those backgrounds receive more support funds

– with the exception of regional students, who will only be able to access extra support if they choose a regional campus.

The plan indicates that the government does not believe rural and regional students face the same level of disadvantage as other under-represented groups and is a significant boost for regional providers, 'recognising the higher costs regional providers face to deliver courses in regional Australia.'

The plan also emphasises a new focus on measurement and better bang for buck in student support; requiring providers to 'invest in evidence-based academic and student support activities that primarily support students from these groups to complete their degrees,' and reporting to 'ensure transparency and accountability.' This emphasis will grate on student support staff who already believe they are delivering measurable support under existing programs.

A new Framework for delivering student support will be overseen by the ATEC, with support to students requiring an elephant stamp from the Australian Centre for Student Equity and Success. This represents a massive centralisation of student support systems, removing control from individual teams and deploying a new franchised approach, based on concerns that the current system is delivering inadequate results. 'Embedding this wealth of evidence, expertise and analysis at the centre of Needs-based Funding would ensure funding is invested in targeted supports that are proven to make a difference,' the report says.

The paper notes that there are a range of issues that need to be explored during consultation including:

- Determining student eligibility for Needs-based Funding (which has echoes of challenges with NDIS funding reform)
- Potential scaling of funding contributions 'to recognise the link between academic preparedness and success'
- Considering the role of Aboriginal Community-Controlled Organisations and other First-Nations-led organisations in delivery and support
- Developing an evidence-based framework of activities that work to improve completion rates for under-represented cohorts – raising questions about how that must



evolve, particularly when AI-assisted supports are rapidly evolving

- 'Potential reform' of other programs such as the Indigenous Student Success Program which currently funds many Indigenous support programs
- Improving student data quality and collection to support the system

As if those variables weren't enough, the Government raises the age-old ATAR chestnut asking 'Would ATAR be an appropriate proxy for academic preparedness? How could academic preparedness best be measured where a new student does not have an ATAR?'

Questions will undoubtedly arise as to whether the Government intends to lock in new arrangements for Needs-based funding in relation to Indigenous students before responding to the Accord's recommendation for a First Nations-led review of HE – a review which presumably would consider Needs-based funding amongst a range of other issues.

Fewer questions will be raised about support for regional students and the use of this mechanism to provide long-overdue recognition of the increased cost of delivery for regional campuses. The paper does not ask for feedback in relation to its decision to address regional student under-representation by throwing more money towards regional campuses, rather than supporting freedom of choice for regional students. While regional campuses have suffered from higher costs for decades, the policy makes no clear rationale for providing needs-based funding to only three of the Accord's four priority groups. (Future Campus – 15 July)



Caps Promise Pipeline Pain Without Rethink by Professor Merlin Crossley.
What a drama around international student caps!

Is it mostly because this is being rushed?

Managing growth is fine. But it's too late to cap for 2025. Many students have already enrolled. Budget commitments, including staff hires, have been made, and international student revenues are supporting not only ongoing research, but our teaching, and are sustaining economic recovery after COVID.

Those who work in universities are shocked at the idea of sudden caps, and for a very simple mathematical reason that relates to pipeline issues associated with the length of degree programs.

Imagine a university offering 3-year degrees, with 300 students, of which 90 are internationals – that is 30% internationals. Now imagine that it is told to get to 20% internationals next year. Surprise – it has to enrol zero international students next year!

But it gets odder. Now it has zero international students in 1st year, 30 in 2nd year, and 30 in 3rd year. At the end of the next two years 30 students graduate, so it has to enrol 30 more each year to stay at 20%. But the year after no international students graduate, so it enrolls zero again. Over the coming years it enrolls 30, 30, zero, 30, 30, zero, forever. It is a weird rollercoaster that will never end.

Let's think about growth and make finer adjustments.

I can see the arguments for managing growth more carefully. The current situation of relying on ever more international students is not sustainable. It arises primarily from the fact that the costs of research are not being funded. Unlike in most other countries only research projects are properly funded, not the infrastructure and costs of running laboratories, libraries etc. There is also a culture of 'skin in the game' here – if you want a new telescope you need to show you are serious and pay half or a quarter.

The problem of unmet costs keeps getting worse because our telescopes keep getting bigger. You might not care about telescopes, but what about microscopes? Think about COVID, think about health, national security, sovereign capability, and economic prosperity. We don't want to be a technological banana republic, and we needn't be – Australia is great at technology.

Group of Eight (Go8) universities are speaking up about all this for a simple reason. Australia has about 40 universities, the Go8 do nearly 70% of the research, and the other 30 universities account for the rest. Go8s require the revenues to keep operating. Happily, Go8s attract most international students, so the system has worked. That's why it's been left to run.

But society has begun to ask if the change is too rapid. That's a fair question.

Some of the concerns are baseless. Some people fear that international students squeeze out Australian students but that is never the case. We just expand our operations, like any 'business' does. Some people fear that international students all end up as immigrants. But, in general, only about one in five students stay, if they get a job and fill a labour shortage. Some people fear that international students take up all the accommodation, but actually universities keep building accommodation and there are much bigger factors affecting housing supply across Australia. Other people worry the rapid pace of growth diminishes educational quality. But if you look at graduate outcomes and student satisfaction, things have been getting better not worse.

All that's happened is that we went through a bust with COVID, and now we're seeing an uneven boom as enrolments bounce back. Controlled growth is what I want too.

I urge everyone to slow down and consider this issue carefully.

We should celebrate the fact that Australia has emerged as a super-power in international education. Who would have thought we would have become the intellectual hub of the Asian time zone? How great have the benefits been in terms of soft-diplomacy, and how good is it that our country keeps building a culture that values education and innovation?

Canada, the UK, and in Trump's days the US, sent signals deterring international students, but we have avoided scoring own goals so far. Isn't there a better way to manage growth than imposing unworkable caps?

I cannot imagine Singapore, or indeed any of our neighbours having this conversation about any of their industries. Universities have been encouraged to be more entrepreneurial and take the weight off the public purse, to keep taxes and domestic fees low.

All this is a good reminder that we need to have more conversations. The capping stakes are so high because we have painted ourselves into a corner and now depend on international student fees to do our day-to-day research. It's time to talk about that as highlighted in the Universities Accord.

So, let's keep discussing all this. Let's talk about the best way to manage growth



rather than jump to caps. And the Minister has promised discussions. Hopefully we'll end up in the right place.

Professor Merlin Crossley is Deputy Vice-Chancellor Academic Quality at UNSW. (Future Campus – 15 July)



The Ten People Already Implementing the ACORD by Stephen Matchett.

The people selected to represent the 'sector and wider community' on the implementation of the Universities Accord are working on the Government's six priorities – and they are expected to report on making them happen next month.

While the Department of Education has only recently announced membership of the Implementation Advisory Committee, they were appointed in May.

The composition of the Committee has been subject to widespread critique – variously for lack of dual sector, lack of regional and lack of Queensland representation. Nonetheless, the Committee's work is in train, chaired by DoE secretary Tony Cook with public servants Natalie James (secretary, Department of Employment and Workplace Relations) and Ben Rimmer (DoE dep sec for HE, Research and International) ex officio members. Mr Rimmer was also on Mary O'Kane's Accord creation team.

The rest of the Committee is no conclave of vice chancellors, with only one of that ilk appointed; David Lloyd, VC of Uni South Australia, Chair of UA and co-VC of in the making Adelaide U.

Although he has a bit on, perhaps Professor Lloyd especially appealed to the government because of his thinking on applied education in universities, long before it was fashionable.

In August 2018 he made a speech pointing out that there is a forge at Stanford University, standing for the vocational education it was created to provide. 'We must move towards the university of the future being a forge, where new knowledge is created from many inputs – and in partnership with others beyond the institution,' he said.

Which should go down well with Jenny Dodd, from TAFE Directors Australia,

whose presence demonstrates the Accord idea of a connected tertiary system is seriously on the government's agenda.

As does Barney Glover, ex Western Sydney U VC, now running the ATEC for training, Jobs and Skills Australia.

Similarly health economist Stephen Duckett's thinking on activity-based funding might apply to both HE and VET – Dr Duckett's Accord submission included how what is now ATEC could function as 'a pricing authority ... for the purposes of a potential student-centred, needs-based funding model.'

Other members are Kungarakan Elder and former chancellor of the University of Canberra, Tom Calma, Verity Firth (UNSW VP, Societal Impact, Equity and Engagement) and Uni Sydney's University Historian, Julia Horne.

They are charged with advising on implementing six priorities.

- Ambitious targets to meet skills needs
- Establishing ATEC
- HE pricing reform
- Managed growth funding
- Funding for equity outcomes
- Commonwealth payments for course placements

The Committee is in place to year end, 'with the option to extend, as required.' (Future Campus – 15 July)

Industry Innovating Without Unis: ABS Report by Stephen Matchett and Tim Winkler. Universities opposing Federal Government caps on international student numbers appear to have been definitively defeated.

Speaking in Parliament last week, Education Minister Jason Clare demonstrated why resistance is futile.

Mr Clare responded to concerns from Helen Haines, the independent member for the regional Victorian seat of Indi in Question Time. Why, she asked will the Government cut international student numbers when regional universities rely on the revenue they generate to, 'educate the nurses, and doctors of the future.' The Minister did not point out that the Commonwealth funds student places for these professions and welcomed the question. Perhaps because it gave him an opportunity to expand on points he had discussed in the previous day's meeting with Dr Haines.

He certainly took the opportunity to repeat the Government's oft-announced reason for the caps, that it will deal 'shonks' in the system – which seemed strange in an answer focused on universities, what with this being far more of a recognised problem in VET than HE.

Mr Clare also pointed to 'positive comments' about the caps from La Trobe U, which has a campus on Dr Haines' patch, plus the Australian Technology Network, has 'indicated its support.' Mr Clare added Uni Queensland Chancellor Peter Varghese, 'a man who has the respect I think of all members of this House' had made supportive comments.

But if there are problems with the Bill, 'I am keen to work with you and I'm keen to work with Senators on this Bill to make sure that we get it right and make sure, for our universities and our other tertiary education providers who educate not just Australians but people from overseas, that we set this important industry up for the future.'

And he will too. When Mr Husic ended up with carriage of the legislation flowing from Industry Minister's inept idea for a student entrepreneur start-up year, he supported a Senate committee having a look. If, as seems certain, a Senate committee looks at the international cap Bill, Mr Clare will probably agree to changes if only to address technical failings raised by government agencies.

But even if amended, the Bill will pass. University lobbies are divided, cancelling each other out and Mr Clare makes an effectively unchallenged case that his reforms are needed to protect the quality of international students, which will play better to his base than a dog-whistle to appeal to voters who think international students make a housing shortage. And it won't be loudly opposed from the Opposition in the Senate, given Mr Dutton's commitments to cut even further. (Future Campus – 17 July)



Adelaide Uni: Great Brand, Tough Sell by Stephen Matchett. The Adelaide Uni brand launched is bang-on for the three markets it must win; but succeeding in the make or break fourth market will take time – lots of time

The new university, combining the existing University of Adelaide and



University of South Australia, is getting ready to go – with an academic program and flexible delivery that makes it greater than the sum of its parts. For a project that only seriously started last year, it is no small achievement, presented in a coherent, credible brand.

Certainly, there is the inevitable guff about livery, 'the monogram balances stability with agility ... its curvature and shape reflect the broader state of South Australia with harmony and openness.'

But overall, the brand identity will speak to the staff who will make the new university work – it is ambitious but understated, a calculated appeal to people who believe deeply in their work and its power to improve individual lives and communities. 'With our history of pioneering achievements, we aim to enable 'firsts' at every level—from supporting first-generation university students to leading in First Nations engagement and driving scientific breakthrough.'

'We will raise the bar by becoming the equalisers of opportunity and catalysts of change' is a standard for teachers, researchers, professional staff to rally around.

For local students, the 'Adelaide attainment model' presents the new university as flexible not flaky, rigorous not reactionary. There is more Uni SA than Uni Adelaide in the pragmatic presentation of education as career-building, but the teaching-promise will appeal to prospective students across generations and across disciplines, from the vocational to the scholarly. 'Modular and stackable learning, a flexible academic calendar, a digital underpinning that embraces AI technologies, work integrated learning, and common core courses across all degree programs, along with embedded graduate qualities to ensure strong employability' is a hell of a sell.

The new brand is also calculated to be SA's State university – there is a calculated pitch to community pride in the foundation brand. 'This tradition of firsts is deeply rooted in South Australia's history ... with our history of pioneering achievements, we aim to enable 'firsts' at every level—from supporting first-generation university students to leading in First Nations engagement and driving scientific breakthroughs.'

Planning for the brand has been intensive – as has the strategy of attempting to

temper expectations, through a pre-launch comms strategy that included Dual VCs Peter Hoj and David Lloyd writing a piece for THE in May waxing lyrical about values and hosing down critique in advance, We know our new logo will be met with both jubilation and judgement.

The Media Release announcing the new brand had comments from the Go8, but not UniSA's affiliated group the ATN, signalling the move to scale and status.

It is a message fundamental for the success of the brand. In pushing the two universities towards merger Premier Peter Malinauskas made it a matter of public interest – and prosperity – bases on the belief that education and research can transform the state.

'What if the next space race took off from our state? What if Whyalla powered the world with clean, green, hydrogen. What if two of the state's leading universities came together to create a global university for the future – welcome to Adelaide University' is the hope, presented implicitly as a promise.

So that's the trifecta, a campaign for staff, students, citizen of SA

But Adelaide U will not deliver on all the admirable aspirations without the fourth audience the merger is intended to attract – international students. Premier Peter Malinauskas drove the merger because he believes that a big, research-strong university will attract fee paying internationals and plenty of them.

But there is nothing in the media statement for international audiences that went out Monday this week that will win over young people in Asia who have never heard of Adelaide and think south Australia is everything below Darwin. It's a start, but the pace needs to pick up fast.

It is peak pangloss to assume that Adelaide Uni can quickly take international student share from the Big Four, who have spent decades building their brands – and alumni networks. The people creating Adelaide Uni know what they intend it to stand for and deliver – the hard part will be reaching and convincing consumers who don't care what a huge achievement the new brand already is.

In the meantime, the UniSA and University of Adelaide marketing teams had to go back to their day jobs on Tuesday, finding a balance in spruiking

their old brands for 2025 intakes without conflicting with the new HE beast, which will spring to life in 2026. (Future Campus – 17 July)



Can a Tertiary Education Commission Craft a Fresh Start for the Sector? By

Valeria Braithwaite. Democracies erode without vibrant universities. These are the institutions where ideas can be debated be they wild or practical, incredible or mundane.

Routine conversations that embrace universities in these terms are rare. The values that underpin our higher learning institutions of open-mindedness, curiosity, thoughtfulness, experimentation, commitment, contestation – as well as the much-discussed academic freedom to inquire – appear in mission statements. They are too infrequently on display in practice.

Universities have complied with external expectations – and incentives set by governments' policies – that they remodel themselves as businesses. They have adopted top-down governance structures. They have thick regulatory crusts that protect against scrutiny and provide information on a must-report basis. They have communication offices to mould the message.

Income streams dominate the consciousness of senior leaders to junior casuals: increasing student enrolments, attracting donors, bringing in grants and lucrative contracts. Building reputation, raising status and developing a prestige brand underpin the creation of new income streams.

Neither status nor prestige have protected vice-chancellors from public controversy over their salaries, exploitation and underpayment of casual staff, an employee mental health crisis, sexual harassment, excessive student debt, financial over-reliance on international students, falling student numbers, student attrition, funding shortages and breaches of teaching and research integrity. Sitting alongside a litany of debacles are regular reviews since the 1990s of the sector, most recently the 'Universities Accord'.

The Accord articulates commitments that the public would expect of universities. First, to generate and impart high quality



knowledge. Second, to provide students with skills that offer good employment prospects. Third, to provide education in a safe university environment that encourages and supports learning. Fourth, to design educational programs for diverse groups from different backgrounds and with different needs. It is not unreasonable to ask: If universities are falling short in meeting such expectations, why?

The Accord identifies funding issues as a major impediment. Sorting out funding has been passed to a new body, the Australian Tertiary Education Commission. The new Commission is expected to be a 'steward of the tertiary education sector', with a coordination, future-focused and evidenced-based decision-making role.

Australia's public universities depend for funding primarily on federal government grants and the contributions of international and domestic students. Higher education has a regulator but, in terms of credibility, no regulator can compete seriously with the government because it holds the purse strings.

Reviews of funding arrangements are a common part of the landscape, each time straining any trust that might exist between the university sector and government. Trust is important for institutional stewardship.

Institutional stewardship means steering financial sustainability and the efficient management of resources in the sector. From the 1980s, governments have been sending the message to the sector that taxpayers are not receiving value for money from publicly-funded universities.

Government has, for decades, poked and prodded to encourage reform but with little apparent effectiveness overall. One might be forgiven for seeing the government's stewardship as punishment arising from impatience with a sector that is not meeting the performance expectations of its funder.

There is considerable evidence that higher education feels poorly treated and undervalued. The sector carries grievance that now reaches deep into the heart of universities. Could institutions have averted this disaster? Without doubt, the answer is yes.

The mistake made by universities, particularly elite universities that enjoy rusted-on domination of traditional disciplines, was that they refused to scale

up and learn from green shoots of innovation. They were so intent on their war with government that they were dismissive of the intellectual entrepreneurs under their noses and how they could engage productively with them in learning, preparing for, and extending the university mission.

A responsible forward-thinking university, aware of the external pressures bearing down on it and responsive to the care of those producing positive outcomes – teachers, researchers, professional staff and students – would have brought their best minds to the table to nut through the benefits and risks of collaboration outside the ivory tower and develop ways of managing risks. They did not. They were too intent on preserving old roles and privileges and their battle with government.

It needs to be underscored that universities need governments that support and fund them. The brouhaha over funding crowds out the fact that they are a good investment for governments. The Accord calls for leadership to settle funding uncertainty. The proposal is for a government-funded Commission with impartial Commissioners who will make the critical funding decisions.

It is easy to blame leadership for the mess that higher education finds itself in. It is equally easy to blame bureaucrats who have no understanding of what is happening on the ground. Similarly, vice-chancellors can be blamed for not rising to the challenge of leading the higher education sector through change to preserve the best of the past, manage the risks of the future, and be courageous and imaginative in creating better, braver tertiary education institutions. Blame, however, will not produce the peace deal that we need.

It is perhaps more productive to see the impasse to peace in its historical context. In 1998, Don Anderson and Richard Johnson from the Centre for Continuing Education at the Australian National University compared university autonomy in twenty countries. Australia was among the countries where government had less authority to intervene but, in practice, was seen as having too much interference in university policies.

Threats to freedom in all walks of life create resistance, eventually defiance. Domination will not subjugate battle-scarred vice-chancellors who believe they are fighting for academic freedom and institutional autonomy. Game playing

tactics of passing responsibility for the mess from one to the other, and now to a new Commission, is what we might expect, given our history and the scars of betrayal on all sides.

A better solution could be for all parties to take an honest look at their tactics, their successes and, most importantly, the harms that have been inflicted on staff and students, and perhaps even on stakeholders more broadly. The issue of lost trust needs to be addressed and then rebuilt.

A university cannot run the government, just as the government cannot run a university. But they can understand and respect the worst fears that each side has and commit to a path forward that provides security that those worst fears will not be realised.

A peace deal cannot be negotiated by a few and imposed on the many if it is to have a chance of success. University vice-chancellors need to be the first to step up, offer respect and engage with others across the sector, and lead with a genuine obligation to improve educational opportunities and outcomes for future generations of students.

Valerie Braithwaite, Emeritus Professor, Australian National University has conducted reviews of the regulation of higher education and vocational education and training for the Commonwealth Government. She currently is a member of the National Vocational Educational & Training Regulatory Advisory Council. The views presented here are her own. (Future Campus – 17 July)



[Peak Uni Body Defers to Government on Stopping Sexual Violence](#) by Stephen Matchett. Universities Australia is trying to reduce the organisational impact of implementing a government plan to protect staff and students from gender-based violence. But the peak university lobby accepts that there is no defying the new regime.

'All UA member universities want to be compliant and do the right thing. Students and their wellbeing are at the centre of this. However, UA is concerned that there is no mechanism for drawing together these standards and this may lead to unintended consequences or



provider confusion,' the lobby states in its response to a national code, proposed in May by the Department of Education, (Future Campus May 30).

A core part of the DoE proposal is a unit of its own, which 'will take an outcomes and risk-based approach to monitoring, assessment and enforcement for compliance when a serious issue is identified.' It extends the oversight announced in November with the decision to establish a National Student Ombudsman, (FC November 22).

UA recommendations include:

- clarifying which regulator does what. UA proposes the Department enforcement unit work with providers to improve standards, the Ombudsman deal with individual complaints and TEQSA have regulatory authority 'where systemic problems occur.' 'Departmental siloes must be avoided to reduce the risk of dilution of good practice already in place,' UA states.
- the government consult with, experts in university governance, legal and integrity matters, 'to ensure universities can report effectively'
- flexibility for international campuses so they comply with national laws
- support to assist capacity building to implement the code
- provision for members to make contractual arrangements on dealing with complaints at third-party provided accommodation.

Universities Australia is particularly focused on procedures, 'UA supports the wellbeing of students who make a disclosure or report of gender-based violence being prioritised. This should include, wherever possible, avoiding the student being re-interviewed. However, this needs to be balanced with the alleged perpetrator's rights and universities' requirements to observe the principles of natural justice and procedural fairness.'

But the lobby is not in a strong position to seek any concessions on anything. The Government's intent to be seen to protecting students and staff follows a Senate committee report last year which found, 'university students who have experienced sexual violence are being significantly re-traumatised and, in some instances, are unable to continue their higher education, as a consequence of their treatment by their university. The committee cannot over-emphasise how troubled it is by these outcomes, nor

over-state how disappointed it is in the university sector's overall response.' (FC September 15)

Employer lobby, the Australian Higher Education Industrial Association gets this. It has a new group working on misconduct. It's first brief is the way university managements use non-disclosure agreements in settling sexual assault and harassment cases. (Future Campus – 19 July)



Student contribution rates for 2025 are announced. Undergraduates in law, business and HASS will pay over-the-top whack, \$16,992 and the feds will kick in \$1,286. Bized and law lobbies have largely kept quiet about the costs since the Libs introduced them for 2021, perhaps because they want prospective students to think their degrees are a bargain at any price. But while humanities and social science groups have complained loud and long, this has not led the government to do anything. It is a contrast with 'prac poverty,' where the government responded to community pressure with funding, at least for trainee teachers and nurses. Certainly there are assumptions that student fee structures will change under the ATEC imperium but after years in place, this Government is under no new pressure to contribute more so students pay less. (Future Campus – 19 July)

The Senate Standing Committee on Legal and Constitutional Affairs is accepting submissions on a Bill to establish a commission of inquiry into antisemitism at Australian universities.

It's a private members bill from Liberal education shadow, Sarah Henderson, who is fierce in her criticism of university managements' handling of protests against Israel's attacks in Gaza, particularly Uni Sydney and especially its VC, Mark Scott. If called to give evidence, Professor Scott's Senate Estimates experience as MD of the ABC will probably be useful. Whatever the Committee recommends and the Senate decides, the Bill is unlikely to pass the House. Last week PM Albanese ruled out an inquiry, saying 'you don't need an inquiry to know that there's been a rise of antisemitism at some of the universities.' (Future Campus – 19 July)

The Australian Academy of Science issues a direct order to the government, in its submission to the Senate inquiry

on the international student cap Bill. 'It is the Government's responsibility to outline a comprehensive plan to fix the broken funding model of university research,' the Academy states. Apart from that, there are two sensible submission suggestions; that HDR students are not included in caps and that caps for public universities and private ones eligible for research funding are set for three years. (Future Campus – 19 July)

The NSW Government announces \$4.5m for its new Non-Animal Technologies Network, to research and ultimately reduce the use of animals in research. 'This may include complex multi-organ models, organs-on-chips, or approaches using machine learning and artificial intelligence.' In March, State Parliament adopted legislation prohibiting forcing animals to swim and inhale smoke for medical experiments. The National Health and Medical Research Council has also recently forbidden such tests. (Future Campus – 19 July)

The pace is picking up on the research commercialisation program announced by the Coalition and continued, with adaptations, by Labor. Universities will share \$180m in new money for Australian Economic Accelerator Ignite (proof of concept) and Innovate (scale) projects. Money is for research in the seven priority areas covered by the National Reconstruction Fund.

The roll-out follows a seed grants pilot last year 'to test and refine key processes and decisions.' In what might be the shape of grants to come, Group of Eight universities won 16 of the 21 (FC October 25).

The 2024 round of National Industry PhD Projects is also announced, ('co-designed research projects with university and industry participation'). Of the 48 awards, QUT leads with six. FC's fave is a 'naturalistic conversational agent to reduce passive fatigue and driver error for commercial transport in regional Australia,' (QUT). When lobbies lament the state of public research and development funding, guess what the government will point to. As for discovery research, the funding argument is lost for the next election and probably the one after. (Future Campus – 19 July)

Charles Sturt U does not appear alarmed by the prospect of caps on international students at city campuses. It has signed a ten-year lease on a



teaching site in Berry Street North Sydney. (Future Campus – 19 July)

The University of Tasmania has had a rare win in its campaign to move to Hobart CBD. A Bill before State Parliament proposes requiring Government approval of the sale of large parts of the Sandy Bay campus for housing – without which the university will struggle to fund the relocation. The University plan is long and bitterly opposed by community activists, but Labor has sided with UTAS and announced it will oppose the Bill. 'The move puts education into the heart of our capital city. It builds world-class facilities in a more accessible location for all southern Tasmanians. It will revitalise the city and rebuild our state's education assets,' Opposition Leader Dean Winter says in a fighting speech, warning that if passed, the Bill will, 'irreparably harm Tasmania's reputation as an investment destination, by pulling the rug out from under a development process the government has supported for the best part of a decade.' The minority Liberal government, with the Greens, should have the numbers in the lower house but the Legislative Council will be decided by some of the seven crossbenchers in the 15-member chamber. The Bill is fronted by minister for a bunch of stuff, other than education, Madeleine Ogilvie, whose seat includes Sandy Bay. She says Labor, 'has betrayed the people of Hobart'. (Future Campus – 19 July)

The Council of the now not long for this life University of Adelaide announces two appointments, company director Susy Daw and 'people and culture specialist' Belinda Jefferys. But what happens when Uni Adelaide disappears into Adelaide U, which will have a Council of its own? A Transition Council is already in-place for the university-to-be, which stays to the end of 2026, as do the two existing university Councils. Members of the three will be eligible for the new Council (unless they are on the selection committee for it), as will people from 'the wider community.' Cynics suggest it is a case of deckchairs on the Titanic, which is harsh – the State's new uni flagship can hardly sink before it is launched. (Future Campus -19 July)

Making Room for New Ways of Working by Stephen Matchett. There are thousands of university staff doing skilled work that did not exist 30 years ago. They don't always fit the long in-place job classifications used by universities, based on generic skills descriptions for pay-scales in the HE industrial award –

especially the divide between academic and professional staff.

The techs who keep the National Collaborative Research Infrastructure System ticking over get this. Their scientific skills mean they work on both sides of the staff divide. NCRIS directors accordingly make the case for a job classification, with KPIs, for these specialist roles (Campus Morning Mail, November 8, 2022).

And there are plenty more people in the same situation, skilled specialists in a 'third space' with ambiguous boundaries that vary across work descriptions and institutions – for example, education content creators, learning tech developers, and work integrated learning entrepreneurs, for starters.

The University of Melbourne's Data Analytics team demonstrates why the divide is now spurious. Defined as 'academic specialists,' they work 'with researchers and partners at all stages of the research lifecycle – from research design and data collection to data analysis, visualisation, and interpretation.' These could be called support roles – except this tea bring adaptable knowledge to collaborate on projects, ranging from using AI in breast-cancer imaging to a text-analysis of a medieval commentary on Livy.

So do Matthew Clemson, Minh Huyn and Alice Huang, Uni Sydney academics who created Dr Mattabolism, a text-based AI that interacts with biochemistry undergraduates.

'There is an inconsistency of roles across the sector,' says Ruth Jelley, a contract learning designer and the National Tertiary Education Union's assistant state secretary for Victoria.

'The very overlapping nature of this third space work can actually create conflict between workers who essentially are trying to achieve the same outcome,' she told a recent NTEU webinar.

And like NCRIS specialists, learning developers can be caught in a no-persons land, 'in many cases, too many cases, across our sector professional staff are restricted from engaging in research to further their expertise.' The same, she says, can apply to academics 'who have issues with the recognition of their work.'

Plus, there's an equity issue with university managements allocating

curriculum design to professional staff, who are paid less than academics.

That's when the third space is noticed at all. As ANU education designer Sue Sharpe, told the NTEU, the Accord did not mention third space staff. 'If this is a road map for our potential future, I find it really problematic that there is a visibility issue, visibility has a flow on effect for career progression.'

The union is on to this -conducting a comprehensive survey for third-space workers what they do, where they are based and their employment conditions.

However, these are part of a bigger issue – the relevance of existing job classifications for both academic and professional staff, created in cyber pre-history, back in the 1990s.

Elizabeth Baré and colleagues (from Melbourne U's higher education research centre) argued during the transformation of working conditions caused by the pandemic, that both academic and professional job classification levels need reviewing, 'particularly with the rise of 'third space' staff. They suggested this needed a system-wide approach and proposed using the enterprise bargaining round now concluded.

Which did not happen – but it needs to. (Future Campus – 24 July)



GO8: R & D in the National Interest by Stephen Matchett. In the absence of new money in the budget, the Government announced a 'strategic review' of research and development. This gives research lobbies the opportunity to call for more (much more) R&D funding for them and less for business. But now the Group of Eight joins in, with a superior call for a national strategy.

The astute Eight pitches their bid for 3% of GDP across public and private sectors in terms that suit the national mood, as a 'nation-building exercise (that) should be a national priority.'

But it still includes variations on long in-place proposals, notably to include universities in the business-focused Research and Development Tax Incentive. The Eight argues that businesses that qualify for the R&DTI and collaborate with 'an Australian research institution' could qualify for equity/debt finance



incentives from the National Reconstruction Fund.

Admirable in consistency is the Group of Eight – in early 2023 it proposed a way round the Fund's ban on contributing to university research by calling for it to allocate \$500m (with matching private capital) for 'innovation that is early in its commercial journey.' And going where the money is, the Eight now wants 'additional intermediaries and aggregators' to encourage superannuation funds to invest in R&D. Plus, there is a call for a similar in scale to the Medical Research Future Fund (now \$22bn in capital) fund focused on unspecified other fields.

Discovery research, which can deliver dividends in the long term, is basic to the Eight's case, 'sometimes without basic research, applied research is not feasible.' The group is too astute to ignore arguments that productivity lifts as small and medium enterprises adopt products and ideas, irrespective of their origins, however the Go8 does pitch an idea which could be interpreted, however erroneously, as private sector=service and public research=service, 'it may well be in the private interests of individual Australian businesses to invest in non-R&D activities, but from a societal perspective, it is R&D that produces knowledge spillover and is the basis for increasing returns to scale, which matters more.'

Above all, the Go8 appeals to R&D as an expression of the nation-building politics Prime Minister Albanese asserts. 'Should the decline in business R&D intensity reflect sub-optimal underinvestment by Australian businesses, it manifests over time in potentially less business innovation and productivity, which in turn implies that Australian businesses will be less competitive, globally and domestically, with productivity and real wages growth less than potentially achievable, and inflation higher than otherwise.'

All up, it is a cleverly constructed, well-argued case for funding public research, some in-partnership with industry. The problem is it will be easily ignored by a government that dare not cut welfare spending and wants to increase defence outlays (have you seen the price of submarines?).

The research commercialisation strategy created by the coalition and continued by Labor gives the government cover to claim it is spending-up on what the Go8

advocates. It isn't but there are sufficient industry-linked programmes that look like R&D, that make it look like the government is already doing what the Go8 recommends. (Future Campus – 24 July)



Regional Campus Vision: Bring World to Us by Tim Winkler. The Government's **Needs-based Funding** plan aims to address rural disadvantage by removing education choice from rural students and giving funding to regional campuses – a starkly different route to that proposed for the other three under-represented groups that the Accord seeks to assist.

There is no stated reason for singling out rural students in this way, while at the same time providing a mechanism for additional funding that would flow to the institutions chosen by any individuals from the other under-represented cohorts (Indigenous students, students with disabilities and low SES students). However, the proposed policy does offer the advantage of addressing the long-ignored evidence that HE provision is more expensive to deliver per student in regional areas, and economies of scale harder to achieve.

It could be argued that the policy addresses a systemic inequity in CSP funding allocation through a back-door allocation of funds which would otherwise be allocated to additional support for an under-represented cohort. Funds for extra support essentially evaporate to address the higher price of service delivery and regional students are left without support allocated to the other under-represented cohorts.

While the sector ruminates on the future of regional HE provision (and occasionally, regional students), **a new paper** suggests that rather than exporting students to the corners of the Earth to gain worldly context and skills that are necessary for the workforce, regional campuses should work to bring the world to their campus. Researchers from Ireland and the UK have **focused on using extended reality** immersive technology to bring experiences and the world to rural HE classrooms, finding that technology can provide a valuable bridge, 'and create opportunities for new patterns of rural education.' Upskilling rural-based HE academic staff in the use of cutting edge classroom tech had the potential to

transform learning outcomes, the authors found.

Meanwhile, researchers in the US have looked beyond the campus boundaries to **look at the impact of changing stipends to avoid stigma** in medical education – in particular, looking at how to grow representation of rural students in Missouri medical schools.

In findings that will be of great interest to the Accord implementation team, the paper found that universal stipends – providing funding to every student, helped to avoid stigmatising stipend recipients and grow student numbers. While the universal stipend was less important to students with higher income, conversations with students indicated that, 'Students from less affluent backgrounds face challenges in medical education beyond those of peers.' Students seeking to get into a medicine course were encouraged to strive for perfection, and the targeting of financial assistance to less wealthy / first in family students conveyed a stigma.

The article ultimately does not prove whether scholarships and subsidies that are not means tested are more effective or less effective than targeted scholarships – but does raise important questions around holistic factors that the Government and sector will need to consider when seeking to double the number of students enrolled in tertiary education by 2050. (Future Campus – 26 July)

A truth universally not acknowledged is that university enterprise agreements can be so complicated that the people who negotiate them, are not entirely clear on content. The Fair Work Commission has just approved variations to the University of Melbourne agreement signed this year, requested by management and unions. 'I am satisfied that the Agreement contains obvious errors and that it is appropriate to correct them,' Deputy President Coleman states. The agreement runs to 129 pages. (Future Campus – 26 July)

The Fair Work Commission is interested in how working from home rights could be included in industrial agreements (Future Campus, March 19) and so it is developing a term, suited to the clerk industrial award, which covers people likely to use such and which could be used in other awards. Such as that applying to higher education professional staff – it would be a useful base to build-on for the



next round of enterprise bargaining. (Future Campus – 26 July)

Management and union reps are deep in the industrial law weeds, searching for a way to apply the new(ish) law that requires employers to offer continuing employment to people they want to keep after two consecutive fixed term contracts. The problem is adding the requirement to immensely complicated enterprise agreements without unintended consequences and the parties are now in their second six-month extension. But it appears that if they don't find a solution soon one may be found for them. The Fair Work Commission announces it will get involved, in September. (Future Campus – 26 July)

Finally, allies are emerging as Uni Tasmania faces the threat of State Parliament vetoing the sale of its Sandy Bay campus, to fund the already-underway relocation to the CBD. Last week, Opposition Leader Dean Winter (Labor) backed the university move, 'builds world-class facilities in a more accessible location.' And now Sue Hickey, a veteran State and Local Government politician and current Mayor of suburban Glenorchy, agrees. And from the north, friends of the university point to the relocation of its Launceston campus to CBD fringe Inveresk, which is generally considered a smart switch. Plus there is a YIMBY push (as in 'yes, in my backyard') that thinks a housing development at Sandy Bay is a splendid idea, stating 'moving the university will also make it easier for people from Hobart's northern and eastern suburbs to get to school via public and active transport, reducing congestion and improving accessibility for people who don't own a car.' The Hobart move is long and loudly opposed by many Sandy Bay residents, who oppose the idea of new housing development next door and by numerous university staff who want it to stay in the suburb. The Bill to require Parliamentary approval of the sale is sponsored by Madeleine Ogilvie, minister for a bunch of things, but not education, in the minority Liberal Government and a member for the State seat that includes Sandy Bay. (Future Campus – 26 July)

The National Institute of Circus Arts is leaving Swinburne U. and moving to Collarts (the Australian College of the Arts), also in inner-city Melbourne. The university's PVC for VET Madelyn Bolch says the move 'allows Swinburne to focus on areas where we are a global leader, like digital technology, space, health and sustainability.' Which fits VC Pascale

Quester's plan, 'my vision for Swinburne is that we need to differentiate from the pack and that our DNA at Swinburne is fundamentally STEM and technology and preparing the human capital required to make it sing,' she said when she started (Campus Morning Mail July 9, 2020). It's also a win for Collarts CEO Sam Jacob, who is steadily building visibility and breadth for the 30-year-old private provider. (Future Campus – 26 July)

The States have joined various university lobbies with special pleading submissions to the Senate Committee Inquiry into the Federal Government's Bill to cap international student numbers. South Australia was quick off the mark weeks back, pointing out that international student growth is a significant reason for merging Uni Adelaide and Uni SA – curiously the submission does not mention that it is why Premier Malinauskas pushed the merger. And now the Victorian State Government repeats the standard arguments about financial damage to research funding, favouring regional over metro campuses and so on but with a State rights twist, 'Victoria does not have as many large regional education providers as New South Wales and Queensland.' And if that does not impress the committee, there is a substance-free plea. 'Victoria would not be Victoria without its international students.' The WA Government presents the same arguments as everybody else, the importance of international education, the slowness of recovery in student numbers and adds that the proposed policy is inconvenient. 'A new Western Australian International Education Strategy is currently under development, intended to set a new pathway for the sector's sustainable growth and expansion following the substantial work done in recovery.' And the ACT Government pushes diversity. 'International students contribute to the social fabric of Canberra, bringing diverse cultural perspectives, traditions and experiences to the community which fosters cultural awareness and appreciation.' Will any of it get the States and Territory anywhere? Probably not. As Universities Australia CEO Luke Sheehy points out, Government and Opposition are 'openly targeting international students in their bid to slash migration' which is 'short-sighted and politically expedient.' And special interest claims from the States are not likely to change Minister's minds, especially when their message is getting through. There was a story in The Australian, Tuesday, which

started, 'rental price growth has slowed amid a crackdown on international student numbers.' (Future Campus – 26 July)

There are universities with no fears of caps on international student numbers on metro campuses. Charles Sturt U has just taken a ten year lease on office space for teaching in as inner-urban as it gets in North Sydney. Uni Wollongong is moving its big-smoke premises from dead-centre Sydney at Circular Quay, but only a km or so, to Darling Harbour. (Future Campus – 26 July)



UA Blows Up Govt Plan to Control ATEC by Stephen Matchett. Universities Australia has rejected the Government's proposal to house the Australian Tertiary Education Commission (ATEC) in the Department of Education.

Instead, the national university peak body calls for ATEC to be an independent authority – modelled along the lines of the Australian Research Council.

With UA president David Lloyd (Uni SA VC) the only Vice-Chancellor on the Government's Accord Implementation Advisory Committee, this is a major setback for Education Minister Jason Clare's unity agenda.

In a scathing response to the Government's proposed model for the new higher education regulator, UA opposes the present implementation plan, released by the Department of Education in June, for three reasons:

1. ATEC will not be independent

The Government's proposal includes locating ATEC within the Department of Education, 'to minimise establishment and operating costs' and for the Department Secretary to be the 'accountable authority for the purposes of the finance law, including annual and financial reporting.'

To which UA responds this would make ATEC staff employees of the Department, with the DoE Secretary responsible for use/management of public funds and outcomes. 'This would not be an environment in which the ATEC would be independent.'

2. ATEC 'would not have sufficient capability'



UA states that as planned, ATEC would only consist of the Chief Commissioner and three part-time Commissioners and warns that they would only have access to some of the Department's HE resources,

'The ATEC should be focused on the new vision for the sector. ... This additional capability will not arise from applying an ATEC label to existing capability,' UA said.

3. ATECs program is not clearly defined or achievable

UA advocates the O'Kane Accord's recommendation of staged implementation, with advice from an advisory committee.

UA also recommends:

- The Government release a 'revised' model for ATEC and a draft on enacting legislation
- Phased development of ATEC, with time 'to acquire and develop additional expertise'
- ATEC's first tasks should be to report on universities financial condition and 'major threats to viability' and advise actions and recommend next steps 'in the development of a unified tertiary sector'
- And in a counterstrike to what UA appears to think is a power-grab by DoE, it calls for ATEC to recruit experts from the HE sector.

'The consultation paper over-emphasised the need to guard against 'narrow sectoral views' of people recently employed in the sector. Employees from the higher education sector are able to carry out new roles professionally. There will be a limited number of experts from outside of the sector who would be available to the ATEC,' UA states.

With individual Vice-Chancellors backing their own university's interests, UA is speaking for the system in a calculated response to the Government's standard divide and rule strategy, which has been used most successfully in the international student cap dispute. (Future Campus – 29 July)



I'm George and I'm Here to Help by Tim Winkler. New Western Sydney University VC has wasted neither time nor words in making headlines of the right kind for his new charge.

Insisting that he would continue the informality favoured by his predecessor Barney Glover, he is on a mission to distance WSU from the ivory tower precinct, and says the sector needs to change its language and its attitude to reconnect with community.

He used a welcome reception speech to declare that universities need to speak less about themselves and focus more on students.

'I want to acknowledge that there's been a loss of trust with universities that has betrayed, I think, the fact that many people see us as straying from our mission. That is, not as corporations, but as public institutions dedicated to the public good.'

'We'll be listening more; we'll be caring more; we'll be getting back to basics; and we'll be doing so in a way that is fundamentally different from other universities in this nation.'

Professor Williams wisely avoided the public obsession with VC pay, but said the sector had to address other headlined grievances.

'There's widespread disenchantment, understandab(y). There's been issues around unpaid wages. There's been issues of scandals where universities have failure to care for their staff and students. And again, my commitment is that under my leadership we will respond to those issues.'

He also flagged moves to reduce costs, flagging an unwillingness to wait until the Federal Government decides to wind back the much-criticised Job Ready Graduates pricing structure.

'We're about to move to \$50,000 Arts degrees in Australia. Now, Arts degrees are usually the degree of choice for Indigenous students and low SES students. It's about to hit \$50,000, and those students are increasingly turning away from a university education.' (Future Campus – 29 July)



Andrew Giles Skills Up by Tim Winkler. Former Immigration Minister Andrew Giles has been moved to the Skills and Training portfolio, taking over from Brendan O'Connor in the Albanese Government's ministerial reshuffle yesterday.

In news that will not please the VET sector, the role has been moved out of Cabinet. Jason Clare remains Minister for Education, leading the charge on the Accord from his chair at the Cabinet table.

Universities Australia CEO Luke Sheehy was quick to welcome Mr Giles to the portfolio.

'Minister Giles' appointment to the skills and training portfolio comes at a crucial time of reform for Australia's tertiary education system.' Mr Sheehy said.

'Universities look forward to working with Minister Giles to increase participation in tertiary education and deliver the skilled workers Australia needs now and into the future.' (Future Campus – 29 July)



Humanities Lobby Wants ATEC Heading Academics Not Administrators by Tim Winkler.

There was an hooraython in response to the Accord's ideal of an independent agency to plan higher education. Now that lobbies are seeing what the feds propose for the Australian Tertiary Education Commission, not so much. And lo! the special pleading has started.

The Australian Academy of the Humanities suggests the Department of Education's proposal is 'strong on administration' but rather misses the point.

Success of Accord and ATEC 'will not be decided only or mainly by Department of Education officers, nor in university executives' offices, but by the quality of the learning that occurs in tutorials and lectures around the country.'

Recognising reality, the Academy accepts HE is stuck with the DoE proposal but suggests something can be saved by, 'targeted, substantive revisions,' including:

- keeping ATEC above administration. 'A strategic ATEC should advise on the objectives, which come before the policies, which in turn precede the sector's metrics.'
- rather than people appointed for 'administrative or corporate capacities' running ATEC will take 'a high-level understanding of the structure and history of higher education'



- including defining ATEC's purpose in legislation, 'providing all Australians with tertiary opportunities because learning is not only useful, it is a primary individual and public good. Learning is fundamental to what it is to be human. It is inexhaustible. It recreates and reforms society. Learning bridges the past, present and future; and benefits the individual, society, and nation.'
- ATEC be empowered to seek advice outside officialdom
- use the five leaned academies, 'to map and monitor our national sovereign capabilities with regard to education programs, disciplinary expertise and output. to map and monitor our national sovereign capabilities with regard to education programs, disciplinary expertise and output'

Overall, the Academy wants academics not officials being the advisors that ATEC relies on,

'ATEC will be an effective steward of the tertiary education in Australia when it can distil informed lessons from researchers and educators, and draw on current advice to improve policymaking and implementation across the higher education sector.'

The IRU and ATN also released statements calling on the planned structure and reporting of ATEC to be reconsidered, while the Go8 took the chance of the change in Home Affairs and Immigration portfolios to call for a re-think on international student caps. (Future Campus – 31 July)



Making Andrew Giles Minister for Skills and Training could be a win for higher education lobbies. Mr Giles is not in cabinet and as such does not have the standing to stick up for his patch in the room where it happens. This will be useful indeed for universities if Accord ideas for combining VET and HE in a single secondary system ever happen. But his appointment is a big loss for supporters of a national VET system. The structural reforms to qualifications and the new Jobs and Skills councils are only just getting going – and both will be exposed to nupathons by State Ministers who do not rate Mr Giles' capacity to stop them claiming their State is different to whatever the national government

proposes. It is also a loss for the VET community in general – the Government has talked up skills and training for years but now demonstrates it is so politically expendable that it does not rate a Cabinet seat. (Future Campus – 2 August)

Uni Adelaide launches 'Classroom Management,' a new micro-credential for school teachers across the country.

'Investigate strategies for creating safe, predictable, productive and orderly learning environments that foster routines, build trust, cultivate a sense of community and support more engaged and productive learning,' is the pitch. Produced by the university's Professional and Continuing Education team, the course takes 48 self-paced hours and is free to users. It is a response to a proposal from the Quality Initial Teacher Education Review. For years the hack formerly known as Campus Morning Mail banged on about the potential for government to use micro-credentials for professional training and community support campaigns. While there is nil chance that anybody in the Department of Education knew or cared, it is very good indeed that the feds are funding Uni Adelaide teacher ed m-cs with \$3m to design and deliver courses. Two more; 'Explicit Teaching' and 'Teaching Phonics' will follow in coming months. Hang on, you ask, are not these all fundamental skills that Initial Teacher Education courses should cover? Quite. (Future Campus – 2 August)

Uni Tasmania announces another completion off Sandy Bay campus. It's the refurb of the Philip Smith Centre, on the Domain – the location of the university's original campus. Yet another irritation for opponents of the university plan to move from Sandy Bay and sell most of the site for housing. (Future Campus – 2 August)

The Budget included funds for the Australian Skills Authority to pilot delegating VET course accreditation to 'selected TAFEs in areas of emerging industry needs.' And ASQA is inching towards being on to it, announcing it will consult with the Department of Employment and Workplace Relations, state training agencies and likely 'a broader reference group.' As to what happens next, ASQA adds it will let us know as details are developed. And so begins the elevation of TAFE to having the fundamental autonomy to accredit its own courses. (Future Campus – 2 August)

The University of Sydney announces an external review of policies and processes to 'safeguard the wellbeing of

our community, academic freedom and freedom of speech.' The University has already announced a new policy on protests, including a 72 hours-notice requirement which the NSW Council of Civil Liberties says shuts-down free speech and encroaches on the right of public assembly. There was a campus protest about it yesterday. The university initiatives come as a Senate committee considers a Bill from Education Shadow Minister Sarah Henderson for a Commission to inquire into antisemitism at Australian universities. Given her trenchant criticism of Uni Sydney VC Mark Scott over his management of pro-Palestinian protests on campus, it is a fair bet Senator Henderson will want him to give evidence. (Future Campus – 2 August)

International Student Caps will Kill Jobs: Norton by Stephen Matchett and Tim Winkler. Thousands of people currently working in the higher education sector will lose their jobs if the Government's plan for international student caps goes ahead, according to Australia's leading HE policy expert.

In a devastating critique of the government's planned approach to slashing international student numbers, ANU Professor Andrew Norton outlines the context and impact of the proposed policy change.

International student numbers are at a record level, largely due to extended stays during COVID. But the government wants them to fall, and fast – in part by capping arrivals. The problem, Andrew Norton warns, is that the government's plan gives an Education Minister unrestrained power to set whatever numbers and in whatever courses they like for every provider. It's set out in the Education Services for Overseas Students Amendment (Quality and Integrity) Bill, now before the Senate.

The result, he predicts, would be, 'thousands of people working in the education sector will lose their jobs. Other industries relying on international students as workers and customers will go into decline.'

Professor Norton notes that the caps policy is so extraordinary that government departments have taken the exceptional step of placing their concerns about the ambiguities, assumptions and administration issues in the enacting legislation on the record, in submissions to a Senate committee inquiry.



Among a mass of detail on disrupted student pipelines and their impact on enrolments, Professor Norton has two warnings.

Firstly, the harm the plan will do to planning by both students and universities/colleges.

'Caps will be very difficult for education providers to administer without risking either under-enrolling relative to their cap or cancelling offers and confirmations of enrolment. Both will damage the providers and the students who want to study at these providers,' he writes.

Secondly, he criticises the folly of government setting caps on numbers in courses, which 'make little sense.'

'The government plans to obstruct international student course choices if they don't align with Australia's skills needs. The idea that international students will pay high fees to study courses focused on Australia's skills needs, rather than their own career interests is unrealistic. International education is a global market from which the students, and not just Australia and its education providers, must benefit.'

Professor Norton acknowledges Education Minister Jason Clare has described the course caps as a 'reserve power' but rightly refers to multiple references to the provision in the Bill

However, Mr Clare has a strong track record in mastering the art of the possible. In April 2023, he was stuck with managing the Bill for a start-up entrepreneur year for new graduates. In the face of scathing criticism in the House, Mr Clare supported the idea of a Senate inquiry, saying 'it will give a further opportunity for us to pressure test this Bill and see what further amendments might be recommended or suggested to the Parliament that could improve this bill.'

He may well do the same thing now, with changes that ease the pressure on universities, if not VET providers, to follow. (Future Campus – 5 August)



[The Empire Strikes Back on Caps](#) by **Stephen Matchett**. The Government's plans to cap international enrolments at universities is 'draconian, interventionist and amounts to economic vandalism,' the

Group of Eight's Vicki Thomson told a Senate committee yesterday. However, Ms Thomson was careful to specify that 'public providers' should be exempt from any cap in the legislation now before the Senate – which would leave private VET and HE colleges to take the hit.

And she offered the government an out – suggesting that it use existing powers to work with universities ... 'and target levels of enrolment appropriate to each institution.'

Universities Australia head Luke Sheehy was equally frank, calling the cap, 'ministerial overreach to an extent we have never seen before.' He warned the bill, 'is more a political smokescreen than an instrument for good policy as the Government seeks to gain an upper hand in a battle over migration ahead of the next election.'

'Chair, we must ask ourselves whether this critically important industry is worth less than the votes the Government is chasing at the polling booth on Election Day,' Mr Sheehy said.

They were both giving evidence to the Senate Education and Employment Legislation Committee at its only scheduled hearing, with witnesses including Vice-Chancellors, private VET and HE lobbies and industry groups.

The big five universities by international enrolments were represented by Vice-Chancellors Duncan Maskell (Uni Melbourne), Sharon Pickering (Monash U) and Deborah Terry (Uni Queensland).

The generality of evidence across all witnesses reiterated the all-but-universal hostility of content of submissions based on institution and industry interests. Terri McDonald from the National Tertiary Education Union said that while the ministerial powers in the bill are presented as an 'emergency power,' 'once they are there as instruments, they can and will be used.'

The Committee is scheduled to report next week, but the Senate Scrutiny of Bills Committee already points to concerns with 'the broad discretionary powers of the Minister.' (Future Campus – 7 August)



[Why Competitive Strategies Harden Universities Arteries](#) by **Stephen**

Matchett. 'Strategic bureaucracy' may be an oxymoron, but it explains how universities work – and don't.

Peter Woelert (Uni Melbourne) researches the ways universities are run, previously pointing to a disconnect between what looks like efficiency from the top but doesn't to those doing the work.

Now he and Bjørn Stensaker (Uni Oslo) explain how universities have developed a governance style they call, 'strategic bureaucracy' where 'a strong focus' on leadership is accompanied by 'an increasingly professionalised and managerial administrative apparatus.'

The operational model comes, they argue, from two interrelated changes, the reduction in state control of universities and competition between them. The issue that interests them is how institutions have incorporated strategic leadership supported by bureaucratic hierarchy.

Which creates a paradox (FC's word not theirs). 'At the level of individual universities, this bureaucratisation process has occurred despite that strengthening universities' institutional autonomy was, ultimately, meant to overcome some of the perceived deficiencies associated with the state's direct bureaucratic control of universities and their operations.'

But the bureaucracy is in the service of central strategy-setting authority, which ends the old model of universities as 'loosely coupled systems' with 'high levels of autonomy for and weak linkages between the various parts.' Top management uses performance indicators and accountability to extend control to university domains, they nominate teaching and research, 'previously left largely to professional self-control.'

Which again, paradoxically, makes them harder to run, with the leadership struggling to assert itself over the centralising bureaucracy meant to serve it. 'The capacity of universities to act strategically may actually become increasingly restricted the more sedimented the strategic bureaucracy becomes within their organizational fabric,' they suggest. By taking autonomy away from operating units, the leadership model disempower the people who can, 'quickly recognize and exploit academic opportunities.'

The take-away: 'in endeavouring to eliminate organizational 'slack' and



looseness within universities, the strategic bureaucracy and the associated features thus ultimately may end up undermining some of the key foundations from which universities derive their responsiveness as organizations in the first place.' (Future Campus – 7 August)



Home Run From Shoemaker by Tim Winkler. Turbocharging homestays could be a key solution in addressing the need to accommodate international students, according to [a new article](#) from VU Vice-Chancellor Professor Adam Shoemaker.

AHURI data indicates that while Australian homes have a total of almost 13 million bedrooms, around a third are empty. At a time of mortgage stress for families and isolation of many older people wishing to remain in their homes, the opportunity to grow accommodation provision for international students is immediately available – on the nation's doorsteps.

Drawing on his own experience coming to Australia as an international student 40 years ago, Professor Shoemaker says the relationships forged through shared accommodation were crucial to finding his feet in his adopted nation.

'Many retirees not in aged care live in homes with two, three or even four bedrooms. Over half of them are in mortgage stress,' Professor Shoemaker writes.

'Why not solve two problems at once by providing incentives to liberate those unused bedrooms for a massive student (and global student) Homestay program. Instead of creating more 'purpose-built' student accommodation two years from now.'

A strategic and deliberate approach to expanding homestay across the nation would help both students and older Australians who wished to take them in.

'To those who say 'twenty-year-olds do not want to live with 65-year-olds' I say: the world cannot continue to squander this opportunity. It might be exactly what both parties would love to do,' Professor Shoemaker writes.

'To those who say, 'what about the safety of both parties?' I say—agreed. And Australia has already run exactly these sorts of Homestay programs for high-

school age students—from Japan, from Korea, from North America—for more than 45 years.'

The plan is ingenious, but does not solve the Government's problem – posturing as tough on immigration, with both major parties scrambling to proclaim their crusades in reducing immigration intakes and the Greens joining the chorus, arguing against a big Australia.

'Everyone seems to be looking for a scapegoat rather than a genuine humanitarian solution which will work,' Professor Shoemaker writes.

'International student numbers are now being blamed for the problem, despite only accounting for 4% of renters in Australia according to a report by Accenture.

'Just two years ago, in the height of the pandemic, it was those same students who were working the toughest and most essential service jobs in our community.

'It is shameful to target global students—who themselves are often not rich and who saved for years to study in a dream-destination like Australia—for our own domestic policy failings.

'There is more housing pressure caused by the number of dwellings which are being land-banked and sitting idle, owned by speculators.' (Future Campus – 9 August)



Unis Set Out Case to Address Gender Based Violence by Stephen Matchett. The Government proposes regulating university managements to address gender-based violence, but Monash and Sydney universities have jumped in first, outlining plans to manage problems on their campuses.

Uni Sydney indicates that its approach is working, but it is careful not to crow. 'Many issues of great concern remain. One case is one too many. To every person who has experienced sexual assault or sexual harassment, we are deeply sorry,' the University said yesterday.

The University of Sydney states it received 246 complaints of sexual misconduct in 2023, of which half were not 'university related.'

It details actions in 2023 on those that were, and presents what it proposes for 2024 – presumably actions now well underway. Among communications and consultations there are actual activities, including, extending 'ethical bystander' training to more students and expanding 'respectful research training' for higher degree supervisors.

As to actual cases, the University reports that four staff were involved in matters from 2022, still live last year. One was sacked, two resigned and another 'was given a first and final warning.'

Monash U has released an 'action plan' for 2024-25 to, 'design and promote best-practice, evidence-based prevention initiatives that centre the experiences of victim-survivors, transform attitudes and behaviours; and support a safer, respectful and more inclusive campus community.'

It sets out six distinct university cultures where this will apply – including teaching and learning, research and impact, student life and staff engagement, although there is nothing specific on what will be done in each.

There will be a second plan in 2026-30, based on what is learnt from the first. And the university commits to publicly reporting progress. Plus Sexual Harm Prevention and Response policies are in development. Presumably they will all build on the 84 specifics in the 2021 plan.

It may, or may not, be enough to encourage the Department of Education, to leave both alone. At the end of May the Department released an issues paper for a national HE code on prevention of and response to gender-based violence. It included a proposal for a dedicated unit to monitor, assess and enforce compliance (FC May 30). (Future Campus – 9 August)



Jason Clare's Bill to cap international student enrolments got very bad reviews from witnesses at the Senate committee considering it Tuesday. So bad that as far as FC could see, the always-available Minister was not all over old-media Wednesday, where he regularly spins the stories of the day. (Very) learned observers suggest that he will keep his head down while officials take some of the power-grab bits out of the Bill, ahead of an amended version



starting again in the Reps. FC is not an accredited augur but does wonder if the Bill has already achieved its political objective, demonstrating the Government is tough on immigration and so could be toned down. Then again, Mr Clare could stick to its existing opportunism, which would put the Opposition in a tight spot. Joining the Greens and some crossbenchers to vote the Bill down in the Senate would give the Government the chance to call the conservatives soft on immigration and not prepared to rein in dodgy VET providers. There is certainly time for things to calm down for the Government. The Committee was originally due to report next week, but this is now extended to August 26, which will make for a big day. There's a new announcement from the Committee that it will take evidence that day in Sydney. (Future Campus – 9 August)

UNSW and the across the road National Institute of Dramatic Art used to be BFFs, at least until the 2020-23 MOU expired. Now not so much, with NIDA unhappy indeed about a university plan for an adjacent student accommodation complex – the very thing the university will need if the Commonwealth legislation tying international student numbers to building more beds goes ahead. NIDA chief Lisa Hughes says the Institute 'is not opposed to the entire development and we recognise the need for student housing, however it can't be at the expense of NIDA's ability to operate.' Residents are upset, because, they say, the project is too big (for 900 students), because it is out of character and sundry other because. Back in May, the University described it as 'a vibrant mixed-use precinct.' The application is with a State Government planning approval panel but whatever is decided, it will not be the end of the issue. (Future Campus – 9 August)

Voced was demoted in last month's ministry reshuffle with skills and training transferred to junior Minister Andrew Giles. Jenny Dodd (TAFE Directors Australia) urges Mr Giles to 'maintain the momentum to a harmonised tertiary education system,' set out in the Universities Accord. But getting anything substantial done will depend on portfolio minister Murray Watt (Employment and Workplace Relations) having a word with Education Minister Jason Clare when Cabinet breaks for coffee. So why isn't Mr Giles reporting to Mr Clare? Perhaps, because having higher education and VET in the same portfolio

would have made life harder for Jason, what with TAFEs keen on being self-accrediting (a pilot is soon to start). University lobbies would prefer to keep that a monopoly for members. (Future Campus – 9 August)

Indigenous – Led Education Key to Lifting Aspiration and Delivering Outcomes in the Regions by Paul Briggs, Travis Morgan and Barry Judd. A new Indigenous-led pathways-based education facility for both Indigenous and non-Indigenous students has opened in Shepparton, providing an exemplar for community-led strengths-based initiatives.

The Munarra Centre for Regional Excellence, opened in Shepparton on 7 August, is the first of its kind in Australia, offering opportunities to not just help close the gap by improving First Nations education outcomes, but also redefine community understanding and appreciation of Indigenous cultures.

The opening is a culmination of decades of work that places First Nations firmly at the heart of higher education and a watershed moment for the Goulburn Murray region.

With Shepparton housing one of the highest Indigenous populations in regional Victoria, the Centre will create a significant uplift in opportunities and pathways for the community. Building on successful educational programs delivered in partnership with the University of Melbourne, La Trobe University and GOTAFE, Munarra will deliver a broad range of VET and higher education courses leading to improved education and employment outcomes in the region.

Munarra builds on highly successful foundational programs such as the Academy of Sport Health and Education (ASHE), which started with six students 20 years ago. ASHE is now a thriving education program offering VCE and TAFE qualifications and has supported over 1,200 students through their transition to employment or further education. In mid-2024 ASHE will be co-located in the Munarra Centre. ASHE will continue to offer VCE and TAFE qualifications along with articulation arrangements for students to undertake relevant diplomas and Bachelor degrees, highlighting the importance of accessible pathways between TAFE and University.

Munarra is a key element of the broader Goulburn Murray Regional Prosperity and

Productivity Plan. The 15-year plan flips how First Nations people are viewed and understood in the regional economy. Rather than looking through a lens of benevolence and intervention, the Plan draws upon the many strengths of the Yorta Yorta and First Nations people who reside in the region to provide a strategy that empowers and strengthens the community. While acknowledging and addressing the past is critical, the focus is squarely on the future and the readiness of the region to convert investment into productivity and prosperity inclusive of Yorta Yorta and other First Nation peoples.

The official opening of Munarra is a moment to imagine the many possibilities and opportunities associated with a thriving Indigenous-led centre for excellence located in regional Victoria. Munarra is poised to play an urgently needed role in bridging the gap in education opportunities between Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australians. Over the years, many programs and interventions have attempted to improve education and training outcomes, with Indigenous-led programs and learning spaces proving the most effective in delivering positive change.

Munarra is well placed to participate in the Government's Regional Study Hub initiative. Becoming a Regional University Study Hub would elevate Munarra's role in supporting students to identify appropriate pathways into tertiary education. Regional students have aspirations for tertiary education but often lack the confidence to convert them into reality. An Indigenous-led Regional University Study Hub in the Goulburn Murray would further empower local organisations to lead change and provide wide-ranging, culturally appropriate support to students from underrepresented groups, setting them up for success.

Looking further ahead, a proposed Indigenous Research Hub, located within Munarra, is part of a commitment to building Indigenous research capabilities and research partnerships, resulting in research that addresses local challenges and delivers economic and social benefits to Indigenous communities and the broader society. An Indigenous Research Hub located in the Goulburn Murray will encourage engagement in research and science among Indigenous people and local communities, leading to greater inclusion of Indigenous knowledge in research, science and policy processes.



The Indigenous Research Hub will play a critical role in building the pipeline of First Nations researchers by harnessing the success of the trailblazing Poche Dungala Kaiela Fellows Program, which supports First Nation PhD candidates from the Goulburn Valley region. Five local Indigenous women have graduated with their PhD's in the last five years, highlighting the potential of Indigenous-led programs to build Indigenous higher education social capital and First Nations leadership within rural communities. Providing academic, cultural and financial support to study on Country is fundamental to the program's success.

Early this year, the Federal Government released the Universities Accord final report that highlighted the importance of Indigenous-led education in delivering the social, economic, and cultural advancement of First Nations people, and improving regional higher education. Central to the Accord is a commitment to First Nations' self-determination. In the context of education, this means going beyond participation, to guaranteeing First Nations people are in decision making roles and have the autonomy to shape their education, including what, how, when and where it takes place.

The Munarra Centre for Regional Excellence offers an impactful case-study showcasing the potential for Indigenous-led initiatives, institutional collaboration, and a whole of community effort to deliver positive change in regional communities.

Authors:

- Paul Briggs AO – Munarra Limited Board Member (Chair of AFL's Indigenous Advisory Board)
 - Travis Morgan – Munarra Limited Board Member
 - Professor Barry Judd – Munarra Limited Board Member, and Deputy Vice Chancellor, Indigenous, University of Melbourne.
- (Future Campus – 9 August)

Early childhood carers and educators, many of whom earn as little as \$24 an hour, are in line for a pay rise. From December they will get a government-funded increase of 10%, followed by another 5% a year later. The deal will lift their annual wages by between \$8,000 and \$10,000. John Buchanan and Frances Flanagan explain why it makes economic sense to pay these workers more. Childcare providers are currently struggling to find the staff they need. But while the government might be winning

praise with its childcare measures, Michelle Grattan says, there is still much unfinished business ahead of the next federal election, due by May 2025. Legislation involving the NDIS, election spending reforms and aged care funding, for example, are still being negotiated. Meanwhile, Anthony Albanese is sliding in the polls and some of his Labor colleagues are growing concerned, all of which points to a busy few months ahead for the prime minister. (The Conversation – 9 August)

BIG DATA, DATA ANALYTICS, BUSINESS INTELLIGENCE

Google anticipates critics getting in the way of the motza to be made using AI in education with complaints that it will destroy teaching jobs and means disadvantaged students are taught by a bot not a person. There's s category in its new Academic Research Awards (US\$150,000) for AI in education, 'with a focus on equity, inclusivity and research on AI-powered learning systems, teacher empowerment and accessibility.' Ah altruism, ain't it grand! (Future Campus – 21 June)

What the Doctors Order in AI by Stephen Matchett. While the HE establishment worries about wrangling AI to suit existing teaching job models, medical researchers are going gangbusters in applied research and crucially, regulation.

There is a new round of ten National Health and Medical Research Council grants focused on applying AI, including a model to make people comfortable with what it will do.

Awards include:

- Winston W K Chong (Monash U): MRI scans can be unreliable for assessing MS progress. AI can improve treatment decisions
- Monika Janda (Uni Queensland): 3D skin-imaging for melanoma in regional communities, 'combined with artificial intelligence clinician support'
- Paul Keal (Uni Sydney): AI targeting for radiotherapy which means reduced side effects on a \$10m device are possible in standard \$3m kit.

Plus, Clair Sullivan (Uni Queensland) proposes a model to address, 'uncertainty around how to safely implement AI, how our workforce will embrace new ways of working, and how consumers will react.'

She proposes a 'scalable, digital infrastructure solution ... overseen by peak national patient safety and regulatory authorities' that 'enables the safe and ethical prospective evaluation of AI.' (Future Campus – 26 June)



Optimists of the Khan Academy kind announce AI can support teachers by providing intensive tutoring. Pessimists suggest the tech will take over. Not in California, though, if the State legislature has its way. A Bill is going to the Governor which specifies that in the community college system, 'the instructor of record for a course of instruction shall be a person who meets the minimum qualifications to serve as a faculty member.' Note 'person.' Problem is, human tutors can't work well without system support. The Victorian Auditor General's Office reports on the State Government's \$1.2bn Tutor Learning Initiative, for small-group support in schools. VAGO found, 'the initiative did not significantly improve students' learning compared to similar non tutored students.' Apparently, the State DoE has the information it needs to improve performance but has not used it. (Future Campus – 28 June)

AI's Growing Influence in Higher Education. With AI use growing across higher ed, it's important that institutions approach it as a tool to free up staff and faculty time for the work AI can't do. (The EvoLLLution – 8 July)

Call For Students to be Heard in AI Regulation by Tim Winkler. A study of news stories about the use of generative AI in higher education has found that a deeper look at the potential and impact of new platforms such as ChatGPT is required – and must include students.

Deakin University's Professor Margaret Bearman and colleagues from India and Copenhagen studied 45 articles published in the months after ChatGPT's arrival and found that while many journalists portrayed the arrival of new platforms as positive, the articles tended to miss key points.



Analysis of the articles published in international media outlets focused on HE found that the articles were shaped by a lens informed by existing issues.

'While being perceived as a disruption of the status quo, the authors generally frame AI as a catalyst for existing agendas, e.g. assessment reform, personalisation, or inclusion,' the authors state.

Negative stories tended to focus on the potential for students to use AI for nefarious purposes, without much evidence of students having a voice in media stories, the paper said; 'the claims mainly portray students as either plagiarists or victims of a failing educational system.'

'Despite being a new technology, our conceptualization of ChatGPT is rooted in previous ways of thinking and talking about AI.'

The authors said that the warnings that articles carried about enabling cheating and challenging existing teaching and learning practices may have been helpful in tempering excessive optimism about the potential of ChatGPT, but also that it was essential, not just desirable, for students to be heard in conversations about the role and use of AI in HE. (Future Campus – 24 July)



Data That Drives the AI Engine by

Stephen Matchett. If information is the oil of our age, AI tools are the refineries. For-profit publishers are locking up supply.

Informa, which owns big-five journal company Taylor and Francis announces a three-year non-exclusive AI partnership with Microsoft, including 'access to advanced learning content and data to help improve relevance and performance of AI systems.'

This upsets academics with articles in T&F journals, who, as is the industry norm and clear in contracts, are unpaid for their work. But this may not be what they should most object to – part of the three-year US\$10m for starters Microsoft deal is, 'explore the development of specialised expert agents for customers such as authors and librarians to assist

with research, understanding and new knowledge creation/sharing.'

It appears that having monetised researchers' work once, the publisher is seeking to do it again – 'customers,' is the give-away – with an AI function that explores the archives.

A nice little earner, especially compared to what leader of the research publishing pack, (2,900 journals) Elsevier is up to.

Its Scopus database includes 27,800 peer-reviewed journals, with metadata and abstracts of articles now searchable by a dedicated AI. The search function includes data extraction, citations and altmetrics to identify impact and predictive analytics to suggest new research areas.

And there are billions of barrels of information as oil to search. Scopus had 90m 'content records' a year or so back.

Whether the research leads generated are value for money, will depend on the quality of the AI and what using it costs – about which Elsevier is not telling, 'the exact cost depends on several factors, including whether you are an existing Scopus customer.'

But whatever that is, it will be a new revenue stream for companies that will keep publishing articles if only to give their AI tools new content to analyse. And academics will keep publish them, unless they want their findings to be excluded from the dedicated AI research refineries. (Future Campus – 31 July)

REPORTS AND RESOURCES

Industry Alignment and Workforce

Preparedness in Higher Ed. Learners today hold high expectations for higher education, seeking it as a gateway to the workforce. It is crucial for institutions of higher learning to prioritize meeting the evolving needs of both employers and students, enabling the latter to fully realize their potential and maximize their opportunities for success. (The EvoLLLution – 22 June)

Navigating the AI Writing Landscape: Lessons from First-Year Composition.

Writing is an essential skill in the workplace, but employers are noticing a gap that higher ed can fill by teaching students how to write effectively using industry tools from their very first year. (The EvoLLLution – 24 June)

Apprentice and trainee numbers down as commencements returning to normal. The latest NCVER report, *Apprentice and trainees 2023: December quarter*, shows that apprentice and trainee numbers are normalising post pandemic.

There were 343 640 apprentices and trainees in-training at the end of December 2023, 32 980 (or 8.8%) less than the same time in 2022. This is a continuation of the decline seen immediately after the COVID era Boosting Apprenticeships Commencements (BAC) scheme ended for new commencements on 30 June 2022.

As at 31 December 2023, the largest year on year decrease in in-training numbers was observed in Clerical and Administrative Workers, which declined by 18 235 (or 44.5%).

Despite the decline in in-training numbers since the BAC scheme ended, NCVER data shows commencements are returning to historical trends. Commencements in the December quarter 2023 were 35 240, and they were consistent with the median number of commencements from 2015 to 2023 (35 230).

Commencements increased by 2.4% when compared with the December quarter 2022. Both trade and non-trade occupations increased between December 2022 and 2023 quarters. Trade occupations increased by 0.9% to 17 010, while non-trade occupations increased by 3.9% to 18 225. (NCVER – 27 June)



Mastering Data for Effective Higher Education Strategies.

To craft the best student experience, it's imperative to have a deep understanding of your audience. This is where data can play a pivotal role in helping institutions make well-informed decisions. (The EvoLLLution – 29 June)

'No Frills' 2024: VET partnerships

powering a dynamic workforce. NCVER has today released the official discussion paper for the 33rd National Vocational Education and Training (VET) Research Conference 'No Frills, to be held in Perth, Western Australia, from 10 to 12 July 2024. The paper illustrates the conference theme 'VET partnerships powering a



dynamic workforce', which focuses on addressing workforce demands and equipping the workforce with necessary skills through targeted education, training and partnerships. The comprehensive 'No Frills' 2024 conference program includes a ministerial address, two keynote presentations, 30 concurrent presentations, two discussion panels, 4 pre-conference professional development workshops and plenty of networking opportunities. (NCVER – 3 July)

Reducing Barriers for Students in Higher Education. Beyond academic hurdles, students often face non-academic barriers that hinder their pursuit of education. By providing personalized support systems outside the classroom, these obstacles can be overcome, empowering students to succeed. (The EvoLLLution – 6 July)

Centring the Voices of Harder to Reach Under-Represented and Disadvantaged Cohorts, a report produced by our office (under the former name of the National Centre for Student Equity in Higher Education) in partnership with ORIMA Research as part of the Universities Accord Review process, is now available publicly on the [Department of Education](#) website. This report captures the voices and lived experience of educationally under-represented and disadvantaged cohorts who are less likely to engage in traditional consultation mechanisms, or require reasonable adjustments in order to engage. (ACSES – 9 July)

Government-funded VET students up in 2023. The latest NCVER report, Government-funded students and courses 2023, provides a summary of data relating to students, programs, subjects and training providers in Australia's government-funded VET system. The report shows there were 1 256 365 students enrolled in government-funded vocational education and training (VET), marking a 5.0% rise from 2022. Growth was predominately seen in training package qualifications, where students increased by 72 500 (or 7.7%) to 1 009 740. There was a notable growth observed in older age groups, particularly the 30-39 age group, which had the largest increase (20 405 or 8.9%) from 2022. By provider type, TAFE institutes experienced the largest growth in government-funded student numbers and increased by 50 240 (or 8.3%) to 659 185. (NCVER – 10 July)

Reimagining Higher Ed: It's Time to Embrace Change (and Technology). Higher education is on the cusp of tremendous change, and it's important

that institutions use it as an opportunity to better serve their learners. (The EvoLLLution – 22 July)

Enhancing Support for International Learners. International students are experiencing significant effects from recent changes in higher education. It is crucial to ensure that adequate support systems are available to assist them. (The EvoLLLution – 27 July)

VET in Schools students increase in 2023. The latest NCVER report shows that the number of students undertaking vocational education and training (VET) as a part of their senior secondary certificate of education has increased in 2023. The VET in Schools 2023 report shows the number of students increased by 3.8% to 252 105 in 2023, when compared with the previous year. Of these students, 19 310 (or 7.7%) participated in a school-based apprenticeship or traineeship, and 232 795 (or 92.3%) in other VET in Schools programs. In 2023, about a quarter of Australian school students aged 15 to 19 participated in VET in Schools. All VET in Schools students were enrolled in a program. Most program enrolments were in training package qualifications, which accounted for 92.8% of enrolments. More than half of the enrolments were in Certificate II level qualifications, and about a third in Certificate III. (NCVER – 31 July)

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

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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

Courtesy of Future Campus.

Nieves Murray is the new deputy chancellor of Uni Wollongong. Ms Murray is a 'long-serving' member of the university's council.

At ANU Rebekah Brown (ex-Monash U) has started work as provost. Jonathan Churchill is Interim COO.

Clare Pollock is incoming VC at Edith Cowan U, moving from DVC at Western Sydney U.

Neena Mitter moves from Uni Queensland to Charles Sturt U as DVC Associate, Global Research.

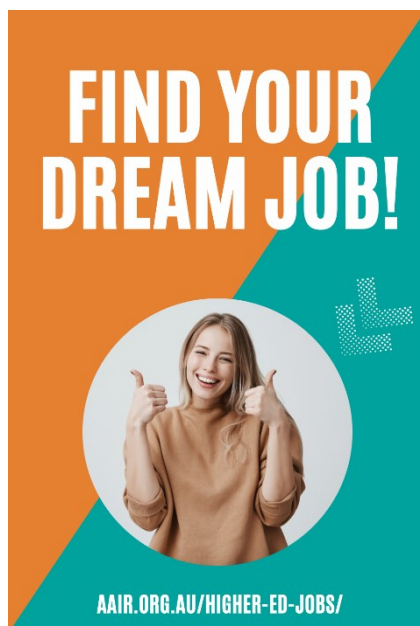
Alana Piper becomes DVC External Engagement and Partnerships at UTS. She joins from the Australian Financial Review.

Alex Stojcevski becomes PVC of Curtin U Singapore, moving from Swinburne U.

Mark Blows is in-coming provost at Uni Queensland. The 25-year UoQ veteran moves from DVC R, replacing Aidan Byrne, who will retire in October.

Mark Sutherland becomes director of Open Access Australasia. He was previously ED of the Council of Australian University Librarians.

POSITIONS VACANT



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

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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@air.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



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[Andrew Bradshaw](#)

Editor, *The Institutional Researcher*

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