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## FROM THE PRESIDENT

## Kia ora everyone

This will be my last blog post as President of AAIR. As we gather for our 2024 AGM on 19 November, I prepare to stand down, passing the rākau (Māori word for stick)—a symbolic baton of AAIR's traditions and practices—to Eva Seidel from Flinders University in Adelaide.

It has been an immense honour and privilege to serve as President of AAIR since February 2020. My term in this role has paralleled my journey towards a Doctor of Professional Practice. I began my doctoral studies in late 2019, just before stepping into the presidency, and now, as I prepare to complete my doctoral journey in November 2024, it's time to also hand over AAIR's leadership.

Balancing a full-time role in organisational research, pursuing a doctorate, and leading AAIR may sound like an intense schedule. And yes, each of these responsibilities could easily fill all my working hours. Yet, for me, they were never separate. Instead, they became beautifully intertwined, each role enhancing the other.

My doctoral research has focused on how we, as professional administrative staff, construct our professional identity within the workplace, and the factors shaping that journey. One of my key findings is the essential role that professional networks such as AAIR play in reinforcing a strong sense of professional identity. Confidence and a strong self-belief are underpinned by communities like AAIR. For me, AAIR has been a place of validation, where I connect with people who understand the challenges of my role. It's a space where I feel at home—my professional whānau (family), my tribe.

Through my research, I've come to appreciate AAIR's impact even more, and I'm committed to ensuring we remain a strong, connected association, with our members always at the heart of everything we do.

In times of change, our connection to AAIR and the professional identity it fosters are truly invaluable. We all work in volatile, dynamic environments where institutions face constant turbulence. Government policies shift, underfunding is far reaching, and uncertainty lingers. But when we step back and reflect on our skills, knowledge, and



expertise, we find that we have a foundation for being adaptable and resilient. With that self-assurance, we can become thought leaders who influence and shape the changes ahead.

Over my nearly five years as president, AAIR has faced its own challenges, yet the executive committee has worked collectively to secure AAIR as a financially robust association with a record-high membership. When I first took on the presidency, membership had dipped from 230 down to around 170 and was projected to decline. Following that path, we might not be here today. And then, of course, the world faced the unprecedented challenge of COVID-19. Together as a committee, we met those challenges head-on. We introduced institutional membership to broaden opportunities within the sector, offered free webinars to enable connection, and, with support from our wonderful partners at Leishman Associates, hosted two highly successful online forums. Thanks to technology, I was even able to introduce a keynote speaker from Finland from our weekend cottage in the hills—out of mobile coverage, but within range of satellite Wi-Fi! Taking the leap to host an online forum meant we could connect with presenters worldwide, sharing invaluable insights and practices.

I now hand over the rākau with confidence. Our membership stands at 358 and continues to grow. Our balance sheet is strong, and we are focused on managing expenses to ensure our members receive the best value for their support. Eva Seidel, with her passion and dedication, is ready to lead AAIR into an exciting future. The AAIR presidency has been in Aotearoa New Zealand since 2017, first with Kathie Rabel from Te Herenga Waka—Victoria University of Wellington, and now with me. The privilege now returns across the Tasman to Eva in Adelaide.

For those attending the 2024 forum in Adelaide, I look forward to seeing you and sharing in our collective practice.

## THE INSTITUTIONAL RESEARCHER ISSUE 7/2024

As I sign off, I want to sincerely acknowledge Liesha Northover, our exceptional Executive Officer. Her unwavering support and guidance have been the steady rudder for both myself and the executive committee, expertly navigating us through the often-choppy seas of our work. Liesha, your regular chats and emails have been more than communication—they were the glue that held us together, grounding and connecting us through every challenge. Thank you, Liesha, for your dedication and steadfast presence.

I leave you with a well-known whakataukī (Māori proverb) that embodies the spirit of AAIR and the importance of human connection:

He aha te mea nui o te ao? He tangata, he tangata, he tangata.

What is the most important thing in the world? It is people, it is people, it is people.

Ngā mihi nui  
Kind regards

Stuart Terry, AAIR President





## EDITORIAL

Dear newsletter readers

Time is quickly approaching for our annual AAIR Forum in Adelaide from 18 to 20 November. I know the organising committee has planned a wonderful program for the AAIR members. If you are thinking of attending, but have not yet committed, please check out the program on the [AAIR Forum website](#). Not only will you enjoy the many discussions and social activities planned around the forum, but you will also reunite with IR colleagues you've met before, and make new lifelong friends.

As I indicated in my previous editorial in the October newsletter, this is my last newsletter. The new AAIR executive committee is still seeking a newsletter editor for 2025 and 2026. To apply, please visit our [Higher Ed Jobs Board](#).

This edition is our final newsletter for 2024. I hope you have enjoyed the contents of the 7 newsletters produced in 2024. For some people, 2024 has gone very quickly. It will not be long before festive season parties commence. I hope all our readers have a wonderful time celebrating their achievements over the year with their colleagues.

Finally, I wish all our readers a very Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year. Enjoy the time celebrating with family and friends. May 2025 be even more successful for you all.

Andrew Bradshaw  
Editor, The Institutional Researcher

## AAIR NEWS

## Upcoming AAIR events



18–20 November 2024 | Adelaide, SA

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.

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 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 18 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!

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



AAIR NEWSLETTER EDITOR

# DESPERATELY SEEKING

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Role Description

## AAIR NEWSLETTER EDITOR

Are you passionate about institutional research and eager to make a meaningful impact in our professional community?

As our AAIR newsletter, you'll collaborate with a dynamic team, curate relevant content, and help shape the voice of our association. Your contributions will highlight best practices and research insights and foster a sense of community among our members.

This is a fantastic professional development opportunity to increase your knowledge of the sector and gain an in-depth understanding of higher education issues at both international and domestic levels.

If you are interested in helping to bring IR news to the world, please simply email us an expression.

We are open to this role being occupied by 2 people (co-editors).

Please email your expression of interest to:

[INFO@AAIR.ORG.AU](mailto:INFO@AAIR.ORG.AU)

### Institutional researcher's corner

#### Five quick questions with Peter Hayes (Edith Cowan University)



#### What is your job title?

Senior Analyst within Strategy and Performance at Edith Cowan University (ECU).

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

I help with:

- state government and Australian Government reporting of student (HE/VET) and staff data
- university level KPIs
- Tableau and Power-BI dashboard creation for university benchmarking

I'm also involved in funding estimates supplied to Government, and I service data science queries for university strategy.

I have worked on projects for:

- predicting student outcomes for targeted retention programs
- optimising admission profiles relative to strategic KPIs
- analysing the effects of changing student learning platforms
- identifying student cohorts with irregularities in student grades, etc.

My background is mathematical physics.

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

- A solid understanding of the Microsoft suite and its capabilities, taking raw data through ETL into

reporting, then using it to generate predictive or prescriptive models.

- To clearly deliver insights/interfaces to clients that won't get lost in information overload.
- To have AI and machine learning skills. Currently AI is accelerating my background understanding and proving indispensable for code generation. In the future, I expect AI will develop entire processing streams.

- To potentially drive insights from campus engagement data to help optimise student services and timetabling.
- To analyse research metrics to showcase impact and guide rankings improvements, and to help in securing funding.
- To invest more in research into diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) analysis, to help address access and support gaps.



While I am on a learning curve for the newer products on the market, I am progressing in this right direction as access to tools becomes more available to staff at ECU.

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

- To continue to leverage data to drive key initiatives in student success, course offerings, and the overall campus experience.
- To provide predictive and prescriptive analytics that make sense to clients, and that deliver insights and cognitive connections to pieces of models that currently exist.
- To continually invest in proactively identifying and supporting at-risk students, thereby enhancing retention and academic outcomes.
- To analyse student performance and job market trends that support curriculum alignment with industry needs.

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

The tasks and challenges faced by universities are often quite similar. Sharing both positive and negative experiences is invaluable for benchmarking performance and generating new ideas. I find that uncovering shared difficulties, especially with sector-wide initiatives like TCSI, is crucial. In these cases, while software suppliers and government agencies promote the benefits and comprehensiveness of their solutions, groups like AAIR provide a space for intentionally isolated providers to gain a more realistic understanding of task complexities, potential pitfalls, and likely timelines.

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

... a supportive team. Working with a group of interesting, rational, good-natured people who care about a task outcome is crucial.



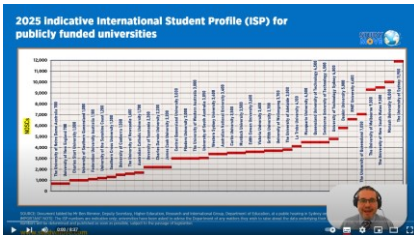


## AIR member contributions

### Indicative Caps for International Students in Australia: Explained

Keri Ramirez from STUDYMOVE would like to share their latest video, which explains the recently announced 2025 indicative limits on international student enrolments for Australian universities.

In this 8-minute video, they cover the key aspects of the methodology to set indicative caps.



 [Watch the video here.](#)



Photo by Andrew Bradshaw Wattamolla Beach – Royal National Park, Sydney

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

**CONTRIBUTE**

## AIR UPDATES

### 2025 AIR Forum 20–23 May at Rosen Shingle Creek Orlando, Florida



The call for proposals is now open for the [2025 AIR Forum May 20–23](#) at the Rosen Shingle Creek Orlando, FL with Pre-Conference Education 19–20 May.

It's a unique opportunity to present at the largest global gathering of higher education professionals working directly in institutional research, institutional effectiveness, assessment, planning, and those who build and support data-informed decision cultures.

I ask for your help in contacting your members, staff, colleagues, and friends with encouragement to submit a presentation proposal for the 2025 AIR Forum. We invite proposals from professionals representing all sectors of higher education and offer a variety of session topics and formats to choose from. Thank you in advance for sharing our message and please reach out with any questions.

Sincerely,

H.A. Scott  
Senior Director of Conference Services  
Association for Institutional Research

## QILT UPDATES

### October 2024 Updates

#### 2025 Key Dates Calendar and fee-for-service Fact Sheets

The [2025 QILT Key Dates Calendar](#) is now available on the Provider Portal. Please ensure you save a copy of this document, either virtually or physically, within easy access as it provides essential information for the coming year. We have also released the 2025 version of fee-for-service fact sheets, including information such as revised rates for fee-for-service activities.

#### Privacy Notice Census

We announced in the August newsletter that the Australian Government Department of Education had commissioned the Social Research Centre to undertake a privacy notice census to understand what notification students

and graduates have been provided concerning the use of the personal information for the purposes of QILT. Further, what consent, if any, has been provided by students, graduates and employers participating in the QILT suite of surveys for the use of their personal information and data for future use such as linking to other data sources.

We are continuing to engage with sector stakeholders regarding the scope of the census, data collection methodology and other matters to ensure this process is clear and smooth for everyone involved. This feedback has been invaluable and is being used to reconsider the data collection methodology and the communication provided.

An updated communique remains a work in progress and will be released in the new year, with further information that should answer all the questions you have asked thus far.

#### Delayed National Report releases

We are aware that the 2023 SES National Report, 2023 SES International Report and 2023 GOS International Report have not yet been publicly released, and we understand this delay may be causing some concern. The Department is working with the Minister's Office to have the reports released as soon as possible.

#### Student Experience Survey (SES)

##### 2024 SES

With the September round ending this month, the 2024 SES collection has officially finished, and we thank all participating institutions for their efforts this year. A total of 257,063 surveys were completed this year, resulting in an indicative overall response rate of 37.1 per cent. Data processing is now underway for the remainder of this year, institution data files are scheduled for release on Tuesday 14 January 2025.

We have also sent an email inviting institutions who participated in the September collection to complete the Respondent Engagement Survey (RES). This is a short survey that provides us with invaluable feedback regarding our engagement materials, project administration and level of support provided to institutions. In addition, we would also like to take this opportunity to gather your feedback about the alternative contemporary designs that we included in this year's Marketing Pack. It doesn't matter if you used them or not.



We'd really love it if you took time out of your day to complete this survey before Monday 28 October as the results are very helpful for our planning and continuous improvement.

We are currently preparing invoices for fee-for-service activities for all institutions participating in the August and September collections. You should expect to receive the invoices by the end of October.

### Course coding queries

We will send course coding queries mid to late this week to all September institutions, and to all institutions participating in the post-field activities in the August round. Please note that this is earlier than previously communicated. If your institution requires extra time to return the files, please let us know as soon as possible.

Note that starting from the 2024 SES, the Social Research Centre will be using an updated TCSI extract to validate course information provided by students who indicate that they are enrolled in a different course to that which is in the 2024 SES sample file. For students who cannot be found in the TCSI extract, institutions may provide updated course information through the coding queries file.

### Graduate Outcomes Survey (GOS)

#### Changes to the 2025 GOS questionnaire

We are making important updates to the labour force module of the GOS, including the addition of ten new questions, removal of one question, and modifications to five existing questions.

These changes aim to measure employment, unemployment, and underemployment consistently with the Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) Labour Force Survey, understand why some graduates are not participating in the labour force, and assess the strength of graduates' attachment to the labour market. These changes will affect a small subset of graduates but are required to ensure an alignment to the definitions and concepts used by ABS labour statistics. Additionally, references to the COVID-19 pandemic will be removed as they are no longer relevant.

Further details regarding these changes will be provided to participating institutions in the weeks prior to the upcoming GOS November collection.

### 2025 GOS November

Sample processing has finished for the 2025 GOS November collection. Thanks to those institutions who submitted their sample early or on time – it really helped us out.

The 2025 GOS November collection will begin with a staggered launch on Tuesday 29 October, with main launch on Thursday 31 October. Participating institutions will be notified prior to each launch once the samples are ready for review in the Reporting Module.

Now is the time to start planning your pre-survey engagement activities. We recommend that all participating institutions run at least one engagement activity prior to fieldwork commencing. This helps to build a sense of legitimacy and trust amongst graduates, thereby encouraging survey completions. A detailed week-by-week outline of other activities to undertake during the fieldwork period, such as liaising with your Alumni team for potential GOS marketing opportunities, is available in the Collection and Sample Guide (section 4.3) 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 the 2025 GOS, 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.

It is also important to speak to your IT team about whitelisting, so that our emails have the best chance of reaching graduates' institutional email addresses. Please see Section 4.6.2 of the Collection and Sample Guide for more information about whitelisting and spam migration.

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

### 2025 GOS February

The 2025 GOS February Collection and Sample Guide, along with the Participation and Additional Services Form (PASF) were distributed to institutions on Monday 14 October. The deadline to confirm participation is the following Monday 21 October.

As with prior years, sampling for the 2025 GOS February is fast approaching, which takes place next month and needs to be completed prior to the end of year break.

### Graduate Outcomes Survey – Longitudinal (GOS-L)

#### 2025 GOS-L

We sent the Participation and Additional Services Form (PASF) on Tuesday 1 October to institutions with sample eligible for the 2025 GOS-L. We kindly ask institutions to complete this form at their earliest convenience to assist with our forward planning. The final day to nominate additional questions is Monday 21 October.

Sample files were distributed on Thursday 10 October and need to be returned to us by Friday 25 October. Please reach out if you are having any issues. The Marketing Pack will be made available in January 2025.

### Employer Satisfaction Survey (ESS)

#### 2024 ESS

We are working on the 2024 ESS deliverables and planning for commencement of the 2025 ESS. Institution data files are scheduled for delivery on Wednesday 20 November, so keep an eye on your inbox for a notification of release.

### QILT Inbox Christmas shutdown

Please note that the QILT inbox will be unattended from Monday 23 December 2024 to Friday 10 January 2025. This means that any emails sent to [qilt@srcentre.com.au](mailto:qilt@srcentre.com.au) during this period will not be answered until the shutdown period ends. If you think you may need assistance during this time, please get in touch in advance so we can assist you, otherwise we will reply to your emails from Monday 13 January 2025.

### Data sharing agreements (UA and IHEA)

This is a friendly reminder that the UA and IHEA data sharing agreements are agreements between the institution, the peak body (UA or IHEA) and the Department. Only approved users that have signed the data access form and submitted it to the Department can receive the data files. The Social Research Centre is only authorised to release files to approved users as advised by the Department. If you are unsure who at your institution is currently approved to receive the files, or would like to update





the list of users, please get in contact with the Department directly at [gilt@education.gov.au](mailto:gilt@education.gov.au).

## CAUDIT UPDATES

### November 2024 Updates

The higher education and research sector has faced its share of challenges recently, with many headlines reflecting these tough times. In the face of these challenges, I am motivated by the passion and dedication of so many of you, delivering incredible services while navigating complex changes, and the incredible impact our sector continues to have.

I marked my 25th year in the sector in May, and I remain deeply grateful that after leaving the military I was fortunate to step into another profession where our efforts make a profound difference.

We hear about this impact when we gather in person, and we have had many such opportunities in October through the Spring Members' Meeting, CAUDIT Awards and AHECS Summit.

The annual CAUDIT Awards Dinner was held at the SMM in Adelaide and served as a powerful reminder of the excellence and innovation that thrive and drive progress in education and research. It is a privilege to review the nominations each year and witness firsthand the passion and commitment of individuals and teams who are striving to drive meaningful change. Congratulations to all recipients, finalists, and nominees, you exemplify what makes this sector extraordinary.

In addition to the CAUDIT Awards, we also presented Meritorious Service Awards to Geoff Purcell and Alex Tegg for their outstanding contributions to CAUDIT and the sector. Read more about their contributions [here](#).

The AHECS Cybersecurity Summit was another fantastic gathering of our higher education and research cybersecurity community. The theme for 2024 was Healthy Growth: Building Resilience from the Roots Up. This centered on fostering growth and resilience while addressing the complex challenges in cybersecurity. The summit's 'by the sector, for the sector' ethos, underscores the collaborative spirit we share, and it was a perfect setting to reflect on how we can collectively ensure a healthier, more secure future, and draw on the roots that connect us – AHECS and CAUDIT – to

achieve this. The private tour of Floriade offered a gentle reminder for us all: amidst the challenges we face, we must take time to reflect and rejuvenate.

As we head into what promises to be an exceptionally busy and unpredictable period, I hope each of you can find a moment for yourselves — to slow down, reflect and smell the roses.

Greg Sawyer  
CEO

## JANZSSA UPDATE

### October 2024 Update

[The latest open access issue of the Journal of the Australian and New Zealand Student Services Association \(JANZSSA\) is now available online.](#)

Featuring research, practice, and commentary from diverse student services scholars across Australia and New Zealand, JANZSSA 32(2) promises to be an essential resource during this transformative period for higher education. If you'd like to contribute to JANZSSA, submissions officially open this month for the April 2025 issue.

## 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

[NCRIS Out in the Open – At Last by Stephen Matchett.](#) 'That's a nice quantumscope you've got here – be a shame if anything happened to it.'

There's a new science resource in the marketplace, but this has one has services to sell. It's Research Infrastructure Australia, which offers, 'over \$4bn worth of tools, data and expertise to address your research challenges.'

Surprised you have not heard of an agency with that sort of kit? Don't be – it's a platform for the National Collaborative Research Infrastructure Strategy (NCRIS) – an enormous national resource nobody outside science knows about.

Which could be a problem. Back in 2015, then Education Minister Christopher Pyne suggested NCRIS could be sacrificed for savings – shortly followed by a Senate Education Committee inquiry to ascertain what member institutions did and why it mattered. Nothing came of Mr Pyne's proposal, but it seems NCRIS people did not enjoy the experience and so, after apparently considerable consideration, a consultant reported two years that 'it is time to shine a light on NCRIS.'

'We can think of few approaches to providing additional stimulus to the Australian economy that are more cost effective than increasing investment,' was the call to arms.

Which is where we are now, with the Research Infrastructure Australia site promoting members, announcing events and providing case studies.

It's an improvement on Department of Education efforts for the agency. The resources page lists a poster (as in a promotional flyer) for what NCRIS can do in advanced manufacturing, or could do when it was created in 2021.

The Australian National Audit Office lists DoE's administration of NCRIS for potential audit. (Future Campus – 27 September)



**As the bitter dispute over international student caps continues**, Phil Honeywood Xed in from Toulouse last Friday. The CEO of the International Education Association of Australia was there with top people from the Network of International Education Associations. 'Really important that we meet together to share policy issues and concerns,' he said. (Future Campus – 27 September)

**TEQSA announces a 'roundtable discussion with universities to help identify best practice which can protect student and staff safety and wellbeing.'** It's with regard to what the regulator describes as, 'the ongoing conflict in the Middle East.' As to who will do the discussing and what come of the conversation, TEQSA is silent. It is invitation only and the agency 'will share any outcomes with the sector in due course.' Perhaps the agency will ask whoever is invited how their universities are meeting their obligations under the threshold standards (raised by TEQSA last month), notably, 'ensuring a safe campus, including teaching and learning spaces.' Be good to know if the agency does and what are the replies. (Future Campus – 27 September)

**Jason Clare could be pleased with media speculation that foreigners who use student visas as cover for working in Australia will try to delay departure by appealing visa cancellations.** It won't be a problem for his proposed quotas – offshore applicants generally have no right of appeal but a rush of applications to stay in the country will make the Minister's point that the education and training systems are being gamed. And a whole lot of gaming could quite possibly be going on. In the first two months of the current financial year, student cases are said to account for over half the Administrative Appeals Tribunal's migration matters. (Future Campus – 27 September)

**While not mentioning Lady Bracknell (to lose one vice chancellor ...).** **University of Canberra will win no current awards for leadership continuity.** Lucy Johnston is out as Interim VC and Stephen Parker is in – yes, the former VC, whose ambitious brand strategy for the university now looks like work from a past golden age, is back. Professor Johnston replaced Paddy Nixon who left in January – he is 'taking a career break' for 'personal reasons.' She was appointed to hold the fort until the VC job was filled. That is done, but present Labor cabinet minister Bill Shorten will not cross the lake from Parliament House until the

start of the 2025 academic year. Until then Professor Parker is in the chair. (Future Campus – 27 September)

**The Feds will fund 500 more postgrad psychology places over four years.** The program kicks off with 146 new places at 22 universities. Plus, there will be 681 12-month internships over four years. For people not watching closely, this might be confused with the practicum payment program, which now applies to teaching, nursing and social work students and which just about all health-related industry and student associations want extended. (Future Campus – 27 September)

**Bureaucracy abhors a vacuum, so the Skills Ministers minco has occupied the degree apprenticeship space.** There's a working group on regulation, funding and IR which will report in July. It will consult with employers and 'employee representatives,' which presumably means unions. And there will be talks with 'other key stakeholders' which could include the few universities in the space. Plus their National Skills Plan includes, 'implementing a suite of initiatives to drive tertiary harmonisation.' The minco mentions, 'better student pathways between VET and higher education,' 'improving regulatory approaches for dual sector providers and TAFEs, and piloting course accreditation 'to select TAFEs.' (Future Campus – 27 September)

**The National Student Ombudsman is taking shape, recruiting for 'various vacancies,'** presumably across its five teams, functions cited are complaints, investigations, restorative engagement, resolution and reporting, strategic Investigations, and outreach and education. Mostly straightforward, although FC counts six distinct tasks and what 'strategic investigations' will be is not clear. The words are not in the Bill, but the Ombudsman can, 'conduct investigations into actions taken by higher education providers' on its own initiative. How fortunate government agencies never go on fishing expeditions.' (Future Campus – 27 September)

**The Government is keen not to let the Greens have the last word on research** and has responded to their dissenting recommendations in the Senate Committee report on legislation enacting the Sheil Review of ARC Act. The Greens wanted:

- to remove the Ministerial veto of research on national security: the government said nothing doing,

because 'security, defence or international relations' are standard terms in legislation

- more money for research and researchers: to which the government responded it, 'understands the need for an appropriate approach to research investment'
- 'democratic and representative' governance of research: 'the government stated the ARC board was appointed in June.

(Future Campus – 27 September)

**Uni Queensland did not join the chorus of Group of Eight complaint about international student quotas**, despite taking a 15% hit on allowed enrolments – from 8,150 this year to 7,000 next year. Plus the university is delivering what the government wants, announcing 1,000 new campus beds for international and Australian students. Construction starts next month. (Future Campus – 27 September)

**Teaching Confidence Counts by Tim Winkler.** Much attention is paid to whether students are equipped to succeed at university, but what happens if academic staff struggle to understand what they are teaching?

A new study by Christine Minty-Walker and colleagues from Western Sydney and UNSW has found that confidence and anxiety in teachers 'are important factors to consider as they can affect student learning.'

The paper is the first to examine the confidence and anxiety levels of nurse academics when teaching numeracy to undergraduate nursing students and found that almost 50% of the 170 nursing academics surveyed reported they were not confident or somewhat confident, and very or somewhat anxious when teaching numeracy.

The study found that level A academics tended to have higher levels of anxiety and less confidence.

'A significant proportion of students are being taught nursing numeracy by nurse academics who lack confidence and experience anxiety, which can be transferred to students, affecting learning and performance,' the author's state.

'The downstream consequences are potentially poor numeracy skills in students and compromised patient safety.



'Strategies that have been effective in reducing school teachers' anxiety could be used to support nurse academics.'

The paper points out that with 17,769 undergraduate students completing their training in 2021, thousands of graduate nurses are walking into hospitals and clinics each year with less than robust numeracy capabilities.

This paper is a valuable start – with a workforce willing to recognise their capability shortcomings in teaching and suggestions on how to address it. Rather than assume the problem lies only with nursing academics, it opens the door to a raft of new research across all disciplines, allowing staff to identify areas where they could brush up on their skills in order to teach more effectively in future.

Rather than write headlines about potential shortcomings of our nurses, the study instead begs the question of who is looking at teaching capabilities across every other discipline to build graduate capability – or avoid tuition culpability. (Future Campus – 30 September)



**Insights on Immigration Retention by Tim Winkler.** While Australia's major parties compete in a race to slam the immigration doors closed in the face of prospective students, some Canadians are examining how best to keep immigrants and retain their skills.

While the Canadian Government is joining Australia in 'muscular' rhetoric and policies capping international student numbers, University of Manitoba student Ka Wai Yip has published a report outlining ways to retain immigrants in second tier cities of Edmonton and Winnipeg.

Far from the rent-shaming and visa gaming headlines, the paper is worthy of note for asking the unfashionable question of how to try to retain skilled students to enrich the Canadian workforce. The paper found that relative affordability of living costs and alignment of job opportunities were unsurprisingly key to retention, with potential for city burghers to set conditions that would retain key grads. (Future Campus – 30 September)



**International Ed Export – Figures In by Stephen Matchett.** Advocates and opponents talk the value of the HE industry up and down, but the Australian Bureau of Statistics sets everybody straight.

In the last financial year, international students in Australia spent \$50.5bn on study costs and living expenses.

It is not as much as it sounds. For a start, the ABS counts all of it as export income even though around \$14.5bn comes from Australian employers paying internationals for work here. According to the Bureau, this is in line with International Monetary Fund rules for determining BOP's.

And even though students are here for years, their spending is covered by the balance of payments, because it is assumed they intend to go home. This changes if they switch residence status. But while they are not here economically, they are physically being counted in population stats.

While the ABS does not mention the argument that international ed export income is inflated, it does acknowledge that the numbers would be 'substantially lower' if students were treated as residents and their earnings and spending went into the local stats. But it's an academic argument; the IMF would have to change definitions and this is not on the agenda for next year's update.

In addition to all the money they kick in, international students are a vast labour force, making up 87% of non-residents eligible to work.

As to what Australians spend studying offshore – it's a rounding error in comparison – just \$500m. (Future Campus – 30 September)



**#I'MBOATARRIVALTOO by Tim Winkler.** Peter Dutton and I probably have many things in common, but one thing is certain; we are both boat people.

In the modern sense at least.

Last week's fireside chat between the Opposition Leader and conservative shock jock Ray Hadley was successful in triggering a range of follow-up headlines after Mr Dutton described international students seeking to stay longer as, 'the modern version of boat arrivals. People have found a weakness in the system, they are exploiting the weakness.'

Given that hundreds of thousands of these students started degrees under the Coalition's reign and arrived legally via an airport, the attempt to smear international students as 'modern boat people' is somewhat surprising. Using this logic, at least 97% of us who can't claim Indigenous ancestry are a 'version of boat arrivals', seeking to cling on to an existence in what was once known as the 'lucky country'.

I am a relatively ancient version of a boat person, descended on my mother's side from folks who can be described variously as surviving or bringing in dreadful diseases aboard leaky ships from Europe – triggering an important public health initiative, Victoria's first quarantine station. So were my ancestors unwelcome, disease-carrying invaders; or law abiding survivors of misfortune who contributed to their new country and community after finally making it ashore? Jumping ashore at a time when European inhabitants were relatively few, labour was scarce and gold was plentiful, it was an easier time to be a boat person, at least once you made it onto Australian shores.

As Mr Dutton has artfully demonstrated, the secret to public engagement – or, in the case of 2GB listeners, public engagement – is clever storytelling.

Education Minister Jason Clare is another master of this art, weaving plotlines relating to his own ascension and his 'I have a dream' style aspiration that others will follow from the hills and plains of western Sydney.

Both major parties see major capital in painting a picture of everyday Australians struggling with rent and bills because of an excess of international students – widely expected to be a key theme of election campaigning over the next year as the nation prepares to head back to the polls.

As long as we allow international students to be faceless, nameless, storyless, they will be an easy target for all sides of politics, and our sector will be the poorer for it – literally and figuratively. We know





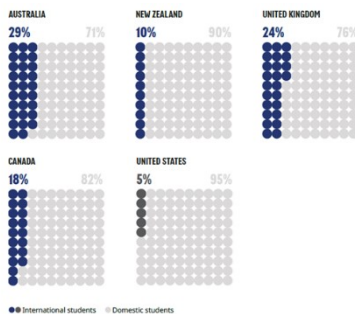
how the parties will attempt to exploit fear around people who are members of our university communities. We have to do better at empowering them to find platforms for their stories if we want any say on what happens next. (Future Campus – 30 September)



**Tough Choices Ahead to Claw Back to Black by Genevieve Beart and James Twaddle.** Many universities across the Anglosphere – Australia, New Zealand, the United Kingdom, Canada – need to re-think their operating parameters as they slide into deficit.

Analysis of universities across these markets quickly reveals many common ingredients. They are characterized by highly educated populations served by institutions with an average of 15,000 equivalent full-time students, research funded through a model of cross-subsidization, and a significant reliance on international students as a source of income.

Ratio of Domestic to International Students in HE in 2022



● International students ● Domestic students  
1. United States includes international students in all tertiary education institutions  
 Source: Australian Department of Education, New Zealand Tertiary Education Commission, UK Higher Education Statistics Agency, report by Higher Education Strategy Associates (Australia), OECD International Student Mobility data

A declining tolerance for student immigration has also triggered cuts to international student numbers in each market. This has been accompanied by increased scarcity of and competition for government funding, policy constraints on student growth and associated fee income, exposure to volatility of demand from key countries such as China and India, greater competition from non-university digital education providers, and inflationary costs.

The Australian higher education sector is not alone in facing into increased financial pressure. Over half of universities across Australia, New Zealand and the United Kingdom experienced a net operating loss in 2022 (the last year of official,

comparable data) – a stark contrast to the state of these sectors in 2018, when less than a quarter were in deficit. As more universities fall into deficit, the risk to long-term financial sustainability grows and institutions will need to choose how to respond.

New Avenues and Hard Decisions for Financial Sustainability

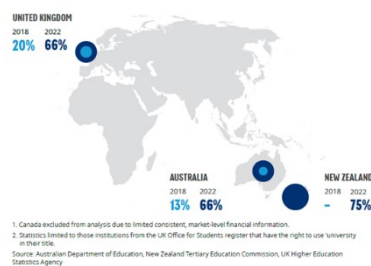
Historically, scale has been a key avenue to drive financial sustainability, with larger student cohorts supporting investment in research and other strategic priorities. Now, scale alone is unlikely to support long-term sustainability, given the scrutiny on international education and slow, or even declining, population growth in domestic university-aged populations.

Regulation and changes to legislation are also making it harder for many universities to pursue growth strategies and more expensive or difficult to operate.

Universities need to rethink the role of their institution and how this translates into future size and shape and the funding sources and operating model that will set them up for success.

With challenging operating environments and threats to revenue, universities can no longer afford to tough it out or wait and see what will happen. Fence-sitting is no longer an option.

Universities with negative operating results by country, (% of total)



Looking across the Anglosphere, institutions are pursuing different approaches to strive towards ongoing financial sustainability. These include:

- New strategic directions: Universities will need to take a more nuanced view of scale when setting their strategic direction. Comprehensive disciplines coverage may not be the right approach for all universities, and some may need to adopt a narrower focus to enable targeted investment.

- Hard funding choices: Universities will need to better prioritise resources to improve financial performance. This may involve ceasing some activities all together, identifying activities that can be completed at lower cost, and sharing them across institutions.
- Operational efficiency: cost pressures are unlikely to abate, and universities will need to embed ongoing operational efficiency into the institution.
- Cultural evolution: Universities are the ultimate human capital-centred organisations and large change is hard to do without an engaged university community. And for it to persist and sustain it needs a supportive cultural environment.

To get back to financial sustainability, universities will need to act across all these domains. If not done in a consistent and coherent way benefits of action will be eroded.

Genevieve Beart is a Principal and James Twaddle is a Partner with Oliver Wyman. (Future Campus – 30 September)



**UG Enrolments: Fewer Taking Longer by Stephen Matchett.** Young Australians are passing on the opportunity to sign up for degrees, with 2023 commencing university enrolments (262,000) essentially matching the last lowest figure, (263,000) in 2013.

Starts are nearly 9% under the latest peak, 2017 (288,000) – ignoring Covid-year numbers (what else was there to do?) which were marginally higher.

The Department of Education suggests starts are down because of cost of living pressures and a strong labour market. Overall, domestic enrolments were 1.076m, down from the 2021 peak of 1.162m and 1.102m in '22.

The good-ish news is that the school leaver market is stable, with 53% of immediate Y12 completers starting university in 2023, same as in '21 and up 2 per cent on '22. DoE suspects fewer gap years post pandemic is the reason.

But if present numbers continue, improvements to attrition won't resolve issues with overall enrolment numbers, as first year classes get smaller and the enrolment pipeline narrows.



Across all public and private universities, the percentage of students not coming back for second year is stable across the last 10 years; 14.65% in 2012, 14.71% in 2022. But the outliers are instructive.

The highest attrition rates for '22 were at Torrens U (27%) CQU and Uni New England (both 24%). All up, 14 Table A and B universities lost 20% of their first year intake in 2022. At the other end, 8 universities had attrition rates 10% or under. UNSW (4.17%) and Uni Melbourne (4.75%) lead.

And those that stick it out are taking longer to complete their course. The six year completion rate was nearly 80% for 2006 starters but fell to 74% for those who began in 2017.

Provider Attrition Rate for overseas commencing bachelor students, 2018–2022

Within Provider attrition rate (%)	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022
CQUUniversity	33.7	46.5	58.0	18.5	67.0
Federation University Australia	36.7	42.1	36.9	9.7	47.9
Southern Cross University	36.8	41.3	35.3	20.7	36.1
University of New South Wales	6.7	7.9	7.8	7.1	5.5
RMIT University	4.0	6.9	5.7	4.5	5.2
The University of Melbourne	3.2	6.2	4.4	4.9	4.2
All Table A and B institutions	9.9	12.7	11.8	8.0	13.2

Image source:

<https://www.education.gov.au/higher-education-statistics/student-data/selected-higher-education-statistics-2023-student-data/key-findings-2023-student-data>

(Future Campus – 2 October)



### [Insights into Uni Response to Sexual Violence Victims by Stephen Matchett.](#)

The Student Ombudsman is coming for universities, ready or not, with legislation through the House and the Senate Education and Employment Committee set for a quick inquiry, due to report October 10.

A [new paper](#) by Allison Henry (UNSW), based on a search of university websites in February, sets out how prepared they were if the Ombudsman inquires about their management of sexual violence.\*

Some weren't:

- Internal Governance: almost two thirds of the 39 members of Universities Australia had standing bodies, 'contributing to a consistent

institutional focus on sexual violence.' Several are chaired by senior university leaders and some include student representatives.

- Up to Date: 'Nearly all' had stand-alone policies and 15 current plans/strategies. However action plans had lapsed in 2023, with no word on replacements, at ANU, QUT, Victoria U and Murdoch University. Others had outdated plans on their websites or referred to plans that were not public, Australian Catholic U, CQU and Uni Tasmania.
- Policies and Procedures: nearly all had stand-alone policies, two-thirds supported by procedural documents.
- Reporting Mechanisms: 'most' had 'clear on-line reporting mechanisms' but five included sexual assault/harassment in their generic reporting/complaints processes, Uni Canberra, Uni Southern Queensland, Uni Adelaide, Federation and Swinburne U's.
- Information on Support Services: universities 'have prominently displayed guidance on accessing internal/external support services. Australian Catholic U, Uni Queensland and Uni Sydney have integrated therapeutic and academic support services.
- Transparency: 15 universities reported consolidated sexual violence data. Six went beyond stating numbers to provide analysis of incidents: ANU, La Trobe U, Monash U, Uni Melbourne, UNSW, Uni Sydney.

The take-out: while 'there are pockets of good practice,' across the system, Dr Henry concludes, 'researchers observed a pattern of initiatives being introduced but then neglected, including out of date policies and action plans, abandoned working groups and broken links on key websites.'

Overall, Dr Henry argues that the single streamlined complaints mechanism the Ombudsman will provide, 'promises to be transformative.'

And she expects the coming national code, implemented by a dedicated unit in the Department of Education, 'will significantly increase institutional accountability and transparency.' (Future Campus – 2 October)



[Undergrad starts in 'society and culture' courses were off pandemic highs and under 100,000 in 2023, the lowest starts since 2013.](#) In contrast, IT enrolments have doubled since then and were up nearly 9% last year on '22. Cue (evil or appropriate, depending on your point of view). Cue laughter from the architects of Job Ready Graduates, arguing arts students are responding to study cost, for next year \$8 under \$17,000 pa. That's less a price signal than an all-points bulletin. It's certainly a better explanation for HASS lobbies than the alternative, that whatever humanities courses are selling, young people aren't buying. (Future Campus – 2 October)

### [ANU announces a restructure to save \\$250m in recurring costs and admits 'some job losses will be unavoidable.'](#)

Not least because \$100m in savings are marked to come from staff costs. So far, the focus is on where academic operating units will sit – all 42 will stay, but eight will move. The only org chart exit is the existing College of Health and Medicine, which will disappear into the new College of Science and Medicine. There are changes to come for other Colleges, with four continuing Colleges to be 'reshaped.' It all may be harder than now sounds, at least if 2021 restructure proposals are an indication. Back then a proposed restructure of Health and Medicine generated a big blue, 'wide-spread concern' is the way management put it, and in the end academic structures stayed much the same, with only 42 positions going over six months, out of 550. This isn't where ANU expected to be after cutting 320 FTE staff in 2021-22. In '22 a break-even outcome for '24 was predicted. But it has not happened and it won't without savings. 'It is not going to be possible to grow our way out of persistent operating deficits by enrolling more students. We need to adapt to a changing policy landscape and broader economic forces by reshaping the way we do things,' Vice Chancellor Genevieve Bell says.' (Future Campus – 4 October)

### [A Senate Committee has knocked back the Liberal Party Bill for an inquiry into antisemitism on campus.](#)

It was never going to happen; back in July the prime minister said, 'you don't need an inquiry to know that there's been a rise of antisemitism at some of the universities.' That's the good news for Vice-Chancellors who hate being called to account for anything. The bad news is the Committee recommends TEQSA and the government's Envoy on Antisemitism collaborate with universities to review



complaints processes. And, perhaps to ensure they do it, the Committee recommends the Attorney General refers antisemitism in universities to the Joint Parliamentary Committee on Human Rights. The way worse news for VCs is that for the second time in a year a Senate Committee has slammed universities in general for the way they don't look after staff and students. 'It is clear to the Committee that university responses to incidents of antisemitism, and the fears of Jewish students and staff, have been woefully inadequate. The committee considers that the universities' responses to this issue are remarkably similar to their historically poor responses to sexual assault and harassment. Staff and student safety is paramount; the committee is disappointed that universities have not implemented more of their learnings in relation to sexual assault and harassment on campuses and applied them in this context. It is a sad indictment on Australian universities that it is only once in crisis that they feel compelled to address serious safety issues on campus, and even then, reluctantly'. (Future Campus – 4 October)

**Curtin U announces it has worked out how badly it stuffed up 4,500 casual and professional staffers pay, 2015-2023.** In total they missed out on \$3.5m due to 'inadvertent payment errors.' There may be more to come – management states it is working on 'issues' affecting casual academics. This looks like a bog-standard stuff-up with payroll staff and systems, not correctly applying overtime and allowances in the university enterprise agreement. Curtin U follows universities across the country in making such mistakes and there is no denying that the National Tertiary Education Union is very big on the detail when it negotiates pay rates; but having signed agreements the least managements can do is deliver. (Future Campus – 4 October)

**The estimable National Centre for Vocational Educational Research presents a not entirely happy snap of how 23-year-olds are doing, based on LSAY data.**

- 61% are working and 24 per cent are working and studying
- 4% are studying full-time
- VET is the highest post-school qualification for 28%. HE 34%. 38% have no qual
- 60 per cent of people with a bachelor degrees are working full-time, 80 per cent for apprentice/trainee completers

- 37% describe themselves as in financial stress.

(Future Campus – 4 October)

**The Group of Eight goes to great lengths to express support for the National Student Ombudsman Bill,** now with a Senate committee, ('an important initiative that will further enhance the safety of students). But the Eight does wonder how it will work, calling for clarity on what it will do that TEQSA, 'and other regulatory bodies' do not. And the Eight suggests the NSO rules could be clearer on distinguishing academic and other elements in complaints. And it wants information on when a student can go straight to the NSO, without completing their university's procedures. There's more but you get the idea. And understandably so given the government looks like it intends for the ombudsman to investigate pretty much what it likes being empowered to initiate its own investigations into HE providers. (Future Campus – 4 October)

**Jason Clare announces a second round of funding to encourage 'our best and brightest' to take up primary school teaching,** with a focus on career changers, like those who come to classrooms via Teach for Australia.. The High Achieving Teacher programme started last year with 105 funded places at La Trobe U. Now there is money for 1500 more, particularly at, TforA (475), Australian Catholic U (275) La Trobe U (231). Charles Sturt U (100) and Western Sydney U (100). The announcement made no mention of what a splendid job the generality of teacher ed courses are doing. But the Australian Education Union makes it clear that it prefers them to Teach for Australia. 'We want a properly qualified, well-supported profession and that starts with high quality initial teacher education,' says federal president Correna Haythorpe. (Future Campus – 4 October)

**NCRIS Critical as Purse Strings Tighten by Anita Gibson.** With the looming financial impacts of international student caps, universities and Australia's research workforce will be looking for ways to do more with less.

This is something that Australia excels at.

We're home to 0.3% of the world's population, but we're responsible for 4% of global research – at a higher quality than other countries with similar population size – and we achieve this with significantly lower expenditure than other OECD countries.

One reason for this is a focus on efficiency – getting the most bang for our buck – and this is where NCRIS has a significant impact. Australia's National Collaborative Research Infrastructure Strategy (NCRIS) ensures the best coverage for Australia by strategically investing in cutting-edge infrastructure across the country, reducing duplication and reducing capital and operational costs. In the new financial climate, universities may reduce their own costs by encouraging staff to take advantage of these national resources.

NCRIS funds a network of 28 RI Providers that covers everything from telescopes to microscopes, supercomputers to ion accelerators, data collections to software platforms, and these are just the start. Their applications are valuable across a broad range of research fields from archaeology to astrophysics, medicine to climate science, indigenous studies to quantum computing. The research infrastructure (RI) is open to anyone – academics, industry, government and the general public – and staffed by resident experts to ensure it is always ready and in top condition.

The capabilities available through the NCRIS network are vast. The new Research Infrastructure Connected (RIC) service helps you to find the tools and data you need as well as the experts who can train and advise you on how to get the most out of these resources. To help you find the RI that can address your research challenges, the RIC website includes an advanced search page to find relevant case studies and NCRIS Providers. Results can be filtered by sector of application, infrastructure type and user type. If you're not sure where to begin or can't find what you're looking for, you can discuss your project with RIC staff and they will connect you with the Providers who can help.

As universities and research groups start to feel the pressure, they may be reaching out to RIC and NCRIS to find more cost-effective options for accessing the tools they need to continue their purpose in society as centres of new knowledge and understanding through research, learning and teaching.

Anita Gibson is RIC Project Manager with the Australian National Fabrication Facility. (Future Campus – 4 October)





### Domestic Apps Growth Slight Light Amidst Gloom by Tim Winkler.

An increasing willingness of undergraduates to consider studying interstate and a recovery in NSW applications has meant that the nation's biggest admissions centre has seen a small uptick in applications this year.

ACT applications were well down, but the ongoing growth in interstate and mature age applications offer a slightly larger applicant pool this year, the Interim Managing Director of UAC, Kim Paino said.

Given the tumultuous year in HE, with multiple policy changes including proposed enrolment caps, this year is expected to be a tightly contested student market. With drops in ATAR of up to 20 points last year to boost enrolments in some universities, and many students receiving multiple offers through early offers and the UAC preference system, the news that the UAC application pool is slightly larger this year will be welcomed by institutions.

There has been a 2.6% growth in total UAC applications, from with 64,541 applications in 2024, including:

- 13% fall in ACT applications to 1,744
- 3% increase in NSW yr 12 apps to 39,970
- 18% increase in interstate applications to 5,349
- 4% increase in non-year 12 applications.

At the same time, there have also been more than 100,000 direct applications processed by UAC on behalf of universities.

'Year 12 demand – at least for applications – is holding firm,' Ms Paino said.

'Of course, what we don't know is how many will progress to enrolment, given the challenging economic times and of course many Year 12s have multiple applications – both through UAC and direct channels. Students have a lot of choice and they're exercising it.'

UAC's applications remain open until Friday 7 February 2025. (Future Campus – 7 October)



### International Student Caps: The Government Will Win Despite its Own Ordinary Arguments by Stephen Matchett.

Parliament sits this week, which will give the Government a chance to pass the international student quotas bill – depending on how much trouble the Opposition is in the mood to make, because it can.

The Senate Committee Inquiry on the bill is due to report tomorrow, nearly two months after the original delivery date and what is in the reports from the parties of government will reflect what happens next. Labor Senators will announce the Bill is the best Parliamentary drafting since Magna Carta. Education shadow Sarah Henderson will likely point out inequities and anomalies especially for legitimate VET private providers, as she has done throughout hearings. But it would be a fair-enough guess for the Government that because the LNP supports the principle of quotas it will not want to be off-side with its base on what is an immigration issue for the electorate.

As of late Friday, the Bill was still on the Government's Senate program for Wednesday, when it could pass, or be returned to the Reps with amendments, but one way or another, quotas appear a fait accompli.

The case the Government has made for them has the policy credibility of TV wrestling performed by the Marx Brothers. First up quotas were presented as a way of dealing with fake VET providers rorting the immigration system – which is true. Then addressing the housing shortage, the Government claimed it is in-part created by international students which only has merit in a few capital city suburbs. This was followed by suggestions that greedy universities are profiting from expanding international enrolments. The Government appears to mean some of the Group of Eight – if so other institutions were just in the wrong ring at the wrong time.

The Government's case is all over the arena and sounds suspiciously like talking points being tested with focus groups.

The explanation of how quotas were set has been less all-in wrestling than a comedy pie-fight, with the Department of Education going the whole Harpo, offering not especially understandable explanations.

But politically, the shambles so far appears to be a win for Labor. While

lobbyists have been agreeing with each other about how terrible it all is for universities and the VET sector, the alternative Government is spruiking even deeper cuts, making the Government's policy comedy appear to be a credible alternative. The divided sector has failed to humanise the issue or address the impact at an electorate or individual level, leaving the stage wide open for the Government to push an image of being heroic rather than ham-fisted, cleaning out bad actors, stopping universities making out like bandits and even trying to help international students – remember them?

Unions NSW official Thomas Costa does. Appearing in the last Committee hearing on Thursday, he made it clear that other than accepting government authority on immigration, his organisation had no view on quotas. But he did have a bit to say on bad treatment of internationals, including; 'We support the fact that the Bill is focusing on integrity and ensuring that there will be quality in the educational sector.'

'We have some experience of where unscrupulous educational providers are connected to employers and arrange for these sorts of exploitative arrangements to happen.'

'For that reason, we think any measures that go towards rooting out those unscrupulous educational providers and their networks with employers that exploit migrant workers are a good thing, and that increased focus in the Bill on the fit and proper person and allowing the measures to be implemented quite quickly is something we see as a good measure.' (Future Campus – 7 October)



### Why Don't We Have an Effective Campaign? By Tim Winkler.

Love the caps or loathe them, it's time to ask why we don't have an effective campaign reminding voters exactly why tertiary education can no longer be tossed around as a policy plaything.

As Angel Calderon asks in this issue, [will this be the lost decade for Australian HE?](#) The answer is that if the sector doesn't coalesce to win support from the electorate, the answer may well be yes.

Sure, some unis hold hopes that caps will recalibrate the playing field in



international recruitment and get them better enrolments – while others can only see a hare-brained hit to their existing operating model and have already jumped to internal job cuts.

Whichever side of the caps fence you are on, we can surely all agree that:

- The hollow reassurances of both major parties that they value international students while also chasing votes by beating their chests over how many tens of thousands of students they can shut out of the country has damaged the reputation of Australia as an education destination internationally
- The expected small bag of dollars to come at MYEFO or pre-election will not rescue the Accord
- The Australian public contemplating whether to fill the car or buy a pre-roasted chicken from the supermarket for dinner still don't think there are consequences for both parties withdrawing revenue certainty from the tertiary sector.

Let's be candid with each other. This battle isn't going to be won or lost in any Senate Committee rooms. We need to be smarter, to learn from other sectors that have succeeded where we are currently failing.

If voters at the next election realise that they may not get enough nurses next year, they may not be able to buy a pre-roasted chicken if avian flu experts aren't trained, they may not see their children graduate into jobs as the nation's economy falters, then suddenly some of the advantages of tertiary education that are taken for granted could come into focus.

I have been working with colleagues to develop new positioning, but whether that work goes anywhere depends on the sector. A leading advertising creative, Rory Mclean, recently described how we need to morph from 'Universities Matter' to 'Australians Matter' or if we are a little less parochial over time, 'Humans Matter/ You Matter.'

The paradox of our position is that we have to talk less about ourselves in order to strengthen ourselves. Under the current approach to engagement, the lost decade is beckoning. (Future Campus – 7 October)



### [Swinburne VC Slams Government on Visas by Stephen Matchett.](#)

The Government has chosen to leave an immigration oversight on hold until quotas are in place and Swinburne U VC Pascale Quester is cross indeed; saying potential for 'unity and progress' under the Accord is no more.

'Instead, we are now faced with knee-jerk decisions, black-box decision-making processes and unprecedented levels of uncertainty. The rationale provided for this freeze is to create more certainty, but it will instead foster division and delays,' Professor Quester said.

Home Affairs Minister Tony Bourke has announced a 'pause' on the Evidence Level changes due now, until the international student quotas legislation is passed. Evidence Levels rate providers, according to outcomes of visa applicants seeking to study with them. Ratings are based on a range of factors, including visa cancellations for people studying at an institution, cases of fraud, visa overstays, 'becoming unlawful non-citizens' and applications for protection visas. The lower a provider's level, the easier it is for international students who want to study there to qualify for a visa.

Professor Quester says the hold on level changes, 'will continue to disrupt the plans of numerous international students, who are essential to Australian society and the economy, further undermining the trust and confidence that international students place in the Australian education system.'

Providers 'who have taken decisive action to improve their processes will be penalised,' she said.

It's not just the Feds who annoy her. Professor Quester also urges the Government 'to avoid policies that appear to simply encourage cartel-like behaviour by some universities.'

No, she does not say which ones. (Future Campus – 9 October)



### [Three R's to Boost Revenue Despite Caps by Tim Winkler.](#)

International caps appear almost inevitable, and if they are not imposed, Ministerial Direction 107 and the bad press about Australia's wish to reduce international student numbers will squash opportunities for revenue growth through international enrolments.

Given that Australia already charges some of the highest fees in the world for degrees (albeit discounted through scholarships and subsidies behind the scenes), there isn't a lot of opportunity for increasing revenue by charging more per degree, without pricing many families out of the market.

Consequently, Universities Australia has estimated that international caps could cost the sector \$4.3b and 14,000 to 22,500 jobs.

Universities have operated on a standardised business model for so long it appears that there has been little latitude to consider opportunities to build revenue outside of the international student recruitment model, so before you repair to the strategy cloisters with the razor gang, here are five ways that revenue could partially recover or grow even while caps are imposed, for discussion (deploy the small groups with butchers paper now please, before we interrupt progress on the future of our institution with the mandatory morning tea break).

- Retention. People typically describe the journey to recruiting a student in terms of a funnel, but in reality, that funnel is just decanting into a leaky bucket. If you can plug part of leak, then you don't need to recruit as many students through the funnel. The Go8 universities that have been hit hardest by caps unfortunately don't have much room to move here – Merlin Crossley at UNSW must have some secret sauce as his institution has the lowest attrition of first years in the nation, followed closely by UoM in [the latest figures from the Federal Government](#). However, if you are at CQU and are losing 24.8% of domestic first year students and 67% of internationals (2022 figures), then there are tremendous revenue (and student satisfaction) gains to be had by giving attrition at least as much attention as marketing and recruitment. On average 86.2% of domestic and 84.2% of international students are passing their first year subjects. Bump that average a little higher, retain more students before census, and you are suddenly seeing millions of dollars extra in the coffers. Retention is clearly set to be a new frontier for tertiary focus, particularly if the Accord's goals and the Government's Needs-Based Funding proposals are going to be realised. It needs to move beyond the realm of just educators, to



include the engagement and analytical savvy of the marketing and comms department to really take off.

- Renting out. HE institutions, in particular universities, are currently criticised for being rich and disconnected, fairly or unfairly. Anyone who drives past a campus after 2pm on a Friday or on a weekend might have a hint as to why. Empty carparks. Closed shops. Windswept walkways. While your EBA might not allow you to teach students en masse after hours, it doesn't preclude you unlocking the doors for tenants and community groups who could turn your campus from cadaver to creative hub for all those days and nights it isn't in use, delivering increased revenue and stronger community engagement. Airlines don't park their planes by the terminal for a long weekend while their pilots take time out to sun themselves by the pool. They find more pilots, pay a couple of cleaners, and get the plane back up in the air again as fast as possible. Obviously you don't want to run a creche in a cancer lab, but there are plenty of other spaces which could be used by others if groups were allowed in.
- Reinvention. Underneath the veneer of innovation, education institutions are deeply conservative beasts, encumbered by fear of failure and a deep and abiding love of doing things the same way year after year despite logic or best practice. Believe me. I have worked in 24 of them. For example, who in your professional teams are using AI to reduce administrative load and make student enrolment/support/administration easier? Who has heard that their institution is committed to reducing red tape only to find more forms introduced to 'streamline' new processes – finding that it only passed workload from one role to another? How much time is spent collectively on expense and workload calculators and processes compared to strategic work in reducing expense and workload?

I haven't touched on the more obvious additional ways to increase revenue – fixing domestic recruitment, which has been fundamentally broken at many institutions for more than a decade; deconstructing and re-packaging traditional degrees into tailored domestic training; TNE opportunities and

continuing to re-shape online delivery. However, as any good strategic planning expert will tell you, there is only so much that you can fit into your institution's annual two-day commitment to strategic planning. Starting off with the 3 R's for revenue rehabilitation is a useful beginning and needs to happen way before you reach for the negative Rs (retrenchment / razor gangs). (Future Campus – 9 October)



#### [Clare to Control International Student Numbers by Stephen Matchett](#)

Late Wednesday, the Senate committee inquiry into legislation giving government power to set international student numbers at all post-school providers recommended the bill be passed. Given the Opposition's position on the need for caps, it will be.

As Coalition Senators state in the first part of their additional comments, 'providing the Government with the power to cap international students ... is crucial because of Labor's gross mismanagement of immigration.'

The jibe aside, the Opposition had no choice, unless it is going to gift the government immigration as an election issue. As Education Minister Jason Clare put it yesterday, 'It is really important to protect the integrity of our international education system, but it is also important to protect public support for international education. I make no apology, the Government makes no apology for our commitment to return migration to pre-pandemic levels.'

The Committee recommendation follows months of protests from universities, plus private HE and voced institutions which led to four delays in reporting. The Government hoped to have the Bill passed this week, but it will now be put to the Senate in November and if amended there, returned to the Reps.

That there will be amendments seems certain, with the Committee recommending changes the Government will wear. These include removing the power to limit course enrolments at universities and TAFEs and including a requirement for annual consultation with providers on their individual quotas. However, the Committee also wants to increase executive authority, giving the Government power to 'exempt specific

classes of students, including by citizenship' for unexplained reasons.

Overall, this is a big win for Mr Clare, his first contested success as minister and a defeat in detail for universities which are now subject to increased Government control of their biggest source of private income.

And other regulatory powers are coming. Legislation for the Student Ombudsman is in the Parliament. It will 'have strong investigative powers, similar to those of a Royal Commission,' Mr Clare said in the House, Wednesday.

And all before the Australian Tertiary Education Commission gets going. (Future Campus – 11 October)



[ANU is in the market for a 'senior philanthropy officer' to raise funds for 'priority projects.'](#) There is no mention whether reducing recurring operating costs by \$250m, announced last week, is a priority. (Future Campus – 11 October)

#### [TEQSA announces action in the Federal Court against Chegg](#)

('from your first assignment to your final exam, get the right tools designed to help you learn). The regulator alleges Chegg contravened 2020 laws that prohibit providing, offering to provide or arranging for a third party to provide an academic cheating service to an HE student. In May last year TEQSA wrote to HE providers asking about 'any concerns,' particularly with Chegg Expert Q&A. Chegg has already taken TEQSA to the court, requesting a judicial review., which considers whether the agency correctly applied the law in making a decision. A case management review of that matter is scheduled for Monday. In what appears a fear of being ignored, training regulator ASQA announced next day (via X) that, 'as a member of the Global Academic Integrity Network (GAIN), we stand up against academic dishonesty.' (Future Campus – 9 October)

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which will interest those members of the public sector research establishment, who think business R&D is an oxymoron and that they could better use the \$11.2bn. The ATO reports that in 2021-22 the biggest beneficiaries of the R&DTI were in the





Professional, Scientific and Technical Services category (scientific research, computer system design and accounting services). Some 688 claiming 'entities' picked up 43% of the funds. Next question will be how usefully it was spent. Future Campus – 11 October)

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The Committee reports criticism of just about everything in the Bill and states,

'some argued that the Bill does not adequately address underlying issues created by the Liberals and Nationals' Job-ready Graduates package.' However, while it 'does not address every concern, or each recommendation of the Universities Accord, it is a significant first step.' Question is, will a second Bill address JRG? (Future Campus – 11 October)

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**After two years work, the Joint Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs, Defence and Trade report** on international tourism and education is out. There's way more about the former

with only one substantive recommendation about the latter that, there be 'support' for regional education providers. This is because international education was covered in last year's interim report, which was great timing given the government has a but on, with international student quotas before parliament. Helpfully, the Committee's final report suggests the government 'should avoid a one-size-fits-all policy that may undermine regional and smaller universities and inadvertently favour larger, metropolitan universities.' (Future Campus – 11 October)

**There are barely 10,000 people at the bottom of the academic precariate, according to Jobs and Skills Australia.**

This does not seem many, but JSA states there are 9,500 university tutors in the country, 88% part-timers and over half under 35. Nearly half of them have postgraduate qualifications and you can bet a bunch of the close to 40% with Bachelor qualifications are studying for a higher degree. You can probably add most of the 25% of the 40,000 university lecturers who work part-time to the pool of academics waiting for a continuing full time job to turn up. (Future Campus – 11 October)

**The Coalition-created-Labor-continued research translation program, Australia's Economic Accelerator is well underway.** It is funding university-based projects with commercial potential and with seven industry experts looking for opportunities, it all sounds like progress. What does not is the tender the Department of Education issued in May for 'strategic advice to the AEA board on market trends and to promote 'program visibility with industry and end-users of research.' In June, it was suspended because of a complaint under s18 of the Government Procurement (Judicial Review) Act (2018) which allows suppliers to complain if they believe a Commonwealth entity or official is 'in contravention of government procurement rules.' Whatever this is about is taking a while to be sorted. And since when does the Government need advice on how to promote that it has money to spend on research? (Future Campus – 11 October)

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want U Tas to stay. The question Labor is wanting answered is what the Greens in State Parliament will do. (Future Campus – 11 October)

**ATN Supports Caps and Calls for Broader Support for Progressive Policy** by Tim Winkler. ATN Chair and Curtin University VC Professor Harlene Hayne has thrown the network's support behind international student caps and called for broader support for 'good' policy.

Following a bold speech at the ATN's 25th Anniversary Dinner this week, Professor Hayne has written an article for Future Campus calling for change, noting that on funding and regulation matters 'the university sector in Australia has not always covered itself in glory.'

Acknowledging that constraints on the operation of universities had left them to fill the research funding gap and more recently basic student services funding shortfalls with international student revenue, Professor Hayne called on universities, 'to lean in and heartily support good policy and to offer helpful, real-world solutions where and when we believe improvements are needed.'

'The recent scuffle over international student caps is just one, albeit very prominent, example of the way in which the individual interests of some universities have begun to trump student need, public good, and best practice.'

'Recognising the role that caps play in a well-managed system, (the ATN) will work closely with Government to develop a measured approach to international education. We will also collaborate to solve other issues facing our sector including funding, regulation, and student safety.'

'We now need to work to rebuild an innovative and equitable higher education system of which Australians can rightly be proud.'

Noting the importance of both research and teaching to the future of the nation and the planet, Professor Hayne exhorted institutions to be more selfless.

'We should never lose sight of our privilege nor of the obligations that come with it.' (Future Campus – 11 October)



**Times are not easy for Australian universities.** A drop in global rankings this week has been blamed on a range of factors, from academic reputation to funding levels and concerns about the impact of upcoming international student caps. A Senate committee has spent the past five months examining the bill to implement the caps, and has now delivered its long-awaited report. As Andrew Norton writes, while it looks like there will be some changes, the federal government's controversial plan to limit international student numbers 'is now almost certain to win parliamentary approval'. Probable changes include some relaxation of caps at the course level and giving institutions more notice about how many students they can enrol. But Norton says it will nevertheless give the government significant new powers, ushering in 'a new era of bureaucratic control from Canberra'. (The Conversation – 11 October)

**[Time to Change Jobs if You Have Rankings in Your KPIs by Tim Winkler.](#)** Australian research productivity and top level research performance has risen, despite many universities sliding in last week's [Times Higher Education World University Rankings](#).

One of the world's leading experts on research performance measurement, Curtin University Professor Cameron Neylon, said that the [Leiden Open University rankings](#), also released to far less fanfare last week, demonstrated a more accurate picture of research performance.

'If improvements in the Times Higher Education rankings are part of your KPI's, then it's time to change your job,' Professor Neylon said.

'I mean it, seriously. If increasing your rank in the Times Higher is one of your KPIs, it should be taken out, because it's not a useful KPI for university leadership in this country at this time.

'All I am seeing looking through these rankings is a bunch of small changes; none of which are statistically significant. They are lagging indicators, several years out of date.

'I am not saying ignore it, because (the THE ranking) does have a material effect on the way the university is perceived, but if the number (of the THE rank) is your KPI then A. You are playing a game you are bound to lose and B. You are also not guiding the university in the right strategic direction.'

Professor Neylon said there was clearly far more investment in university research in other countries, than in Australia, so our research performance would continue to decline relative to other nations, but that did not mean our research was going backwards. The Leiden ranking indicated that there had been a strong increase in research performance particularly among the ATN universities and positive improvements in research performance on average across the country – just at a lower rate of growth than in other countries with higher research investment.

In the absence of any Federal Government program to replace ERA to measure research performance, it appeared some people were latching onto the rankings as proof that Australian universities were in decline, but the sector was being presented with an opportunity to tell its own story in the vacuum that had been left behind.

While many DVC R's around the country were thinking about ways to better measure and manage research performance, the issue appeared not to have risen on to the radar of Councils or the wider public, Professor Neylon said.

'In the absence of Government inaction to replace ERA, there are big opportunities for the sector to choose how to tell its own story about research performance, what should be measured and what matters.' (Future Campus – 14 October)



**[International Student Caps: The Government Will Win Despite Its Own Ordinary Arguments by Eric Knight.](#)**

I was born and raised in Sydney; but my mother was a migrant from Hong Kong. The first and only person in her family to go to university, she waited tables when she arrived, before getting a job as a social worker in Canterbury-Bankstown in Sydney's western suburbs and working as a Chinese interpreter on nights and weekends.

My father couldn't have been more different: a fourth generation Australian, he grew up in Hornsby in Sydney's North Shore. He did nighttime classes in accounting at Macquarie University whilst holding down a job as a grocer. He travelled through Asia to buy things like plastic forks and serviettes so that the

grocer he worked for could become a supermarket called No Frills Franklins.

These were my parents – an unlikely union between two different cultures – but the dreams they had for their kids emanated from a very Sydney story. A story about a city made great not by its Bridge and Harbour, its houses and high rises, parks and waterways...but by a bigger idea: that a person, irrespective of the circumstances of their birth, or the colour of their passport, could dream big and find a place in this city to live, to work, to study.

They hoped I would go to university but were overjoyed when I later got a chance to be an international student as an Australian Rhodes Scholar at Oxford University in the United Kingdom because they knew that in a connected country we need people who are able to move seamlessly between different parts of the world.

When I decided to turn down opportunities in New York and London to come back to Australia, they knew I was making the right choice because in a fair country, what is important is not how much you get paid, but the gap between the rich and the poor. That is the gap a country's investment in education closes.

And when I left a business life in Boston Consulting Group to become a university educator – to go back into the classroom and work with catchment schools in our region – they were proud because they know that in a country of light and hope, it is education in schools, TAFEs, and universities that empower people from all walks to live the life they have reason to value.

But let's face it: right now that big idea is under challenge in Australia. Housing is expensive. Hospitals are busy. Teachers feel overworked, and roads and trainlines are being built but still feel out of reach for some.

In the face of these challenges, there are people in our country who say we must slow down, turn back. They say there is no more room for international students; that we must divide our country and higher education sector between citizens and foreigners, cities and regions, social scientists and engineers, between those who are over 35 years old and under 35 years old and whose post study work rights we must rescind on the eve of their graduation.



I think our country needs to celebrate leaders who choose a different path. Now is the time to celebrate those who, when faced with today's challenges, are designing tomorrow by using their energy, intellect and social networks to imagine an Australia which is connected, fair and hopeful.

We need leaders who, when faced with a problem, say: 'We can fix this, if we bring those working in different sectors together.'

Faced with public dissent, we need leaders who ask, 'How can we inform, look long term, and speak to a future that appeals to our higher angels'.

Those leaders know that our country is situated in a global context and must be a beacon for talent from around the world and in particular from across Asia. Well may some wish to privilege the dreams of a kid from Bankstown. But the dreams of a kid from Bankstown are not that different from the dreams of a kid from Bangalore. They are just different moments of time in the human migratory story of this place we call Australia. Indeed, for some of us born of two continents, they are two dreams united in the promise of Australia.

Australia's civic life is not advanced by treating international education as if this is about revenue, university financing, or the haves and have nots of housing. This is about human livelihoods. It is about brave souls whose families have saved hard, get on a plane, and imagine a better life for themselves either here or in their home country if they study hard and have a go.

In 2004, Barack Obama addressed the Democratic National Convention by sharing the dreams of his father. They were to be a foreign student, in a place called America, not for its weather and beaches, but because of its organizing idea: that opportunity comes to those who persevere. If America would not have Barack Obama but for international education, what happens to Australia when Asia's next generation knows us better for the deficits and conditionalities we place on our future than on our higher purpose together?

This is amended from a speech given in the presence of the Prime Minister and NSW Deputy Premier at the Sydney Awards hosted by the Committee for Sydney by Professor Eric Knight, Deputy Vice-Chancellor (People and Operations)

at Macquarie University. (Future Campus – 14 October)



**Sharp Rise in Domestic Qld Market by Tim Winkler.** An increase in effort to engage non-school leavers appears to be paying dividends for Queensland institutions, with a 10.6% increase in applications compared to the same time last year.

QTAC interim CEO Chris Veraa said these results bucked the trend of a decline in domestic applications in recent years, particularly in the non-school leaver market, which comprised roughly half of all applicants in a typical year.

QTAC had received 40,122 finalised applications in the year to date, with 82% of offers accepted, compared to 74% at the same time last year. Finalised applications from year 12 and mature age applicants are both up by more than 10%, while interstate applications were up 9.2%.

'After a decline in 2023, we are seeing a significant increase in applications this year,' Mr Veraa said.

'The growth is very positive for higher education institutions in Queensland, particularly given the policy changes around international caps focusing more attention on opportunities for domestic enrolments.'

While it was difficult to pinpoint definitive reasons for the rise, Mr Veraa said the QTAC team had focused on piloting approaches that would strengthen the domestic applicant pipeline, with a particular focus on non-school leavers.

'We typically see around 60,000 applications across the whole year, so to see this positive trend at this early stage is very encouraging,' he said.

'What we are seeing with non-year 12s is that because they don't have access to the same level of support that year 12s do – they don't have copies of the QTAC guide at school and don't have careers counsellors – they are sometimes lacking critical information or advice that could give them an increased chance of success.'

'We've implemented some initiatives focused on outreach to non-year 12 applicants, such as those who may not realise they need to submit additional

documentation, or those who have submitted just one preference rather than selecting multiple preferences to maximise the likelihood of an offer.

'QTAC offers applicants a choice of up to six preferences and the likelihood of getting an offer goes up significantly once you put down 3 or 4 preferences. If a mature age applicant has only 1 or 2, we have been contacting them and advising them to list some additional options for a better chance of success.'

'As we get later in the cycle we will do similar outreach to any Year 12s who are similarly at risk, to help them over the line. It's not about changing their preferred institutions or courses, it's about giving them every opportunity to get a place at university, and making sure they have the help and the advice that they need to get there.'

'Adult learners are a really significant part of our applicant mix and we think there can be really positive results for everybody by ensuring that our focus is broader than just secondary school students.' (Future Campus – 16 October)



**Imported Medicos Raise College Ire – and Policy Eyebrows by Tim Winkler.**

The Federal Government is set to welcome offshore-trained GPs to Australia from Monday next week – raising concerns from the peak group for GPs and raising eyebrows among those seeking policy consistency for the nation's future workforce.

While the Opposition leader has likened international students to 'Boat arrivals' and the Federal Government have kicked off their pre-election campaign running hard on the virtues of international student caps, the nation's Health Ministers have given the green light to doctors from overseas, trained in Ireland, New Zealand or the UK.

The Health Ministers have agreed that GPs trained in the three offshore locations will be able to bypass testing by the Royal Australian College of GPs and instead be registered by Australian Health Practitioner Regulation Agency (AHPRA).

The irony of filling Australian job vacancies with offshore graduates while preventing more from studying in Australia doesn't yet appear to have registered in the national consciousness.





It could be construed as a significant shift from a 'grow your own' workforce approach, where a proportion of international students are allowed to remain on our shores to ply their trade according to workforce need; to a skills import model, where local training programs remain tightly controlled in a range of professions, forcing skills gaps to be plugged by people trained offshore.

The RACGPs was not happy, saying that health ministers would figuratively have blood on their hands if any blunders were committed by the offshore-trained medicos, saying that the AHPRA was not ready or suitable to assess doctors trained offshore.

Whether the decision to allow more offshore graduates into Australia changes rhetoric about boat arrivals and rent raisers remains to be seen, but the move is also interesting for policy watchers. It is an early shot across the bows of professional peak bodies, which have tightly controlled university curricula and in some cases intake numbers for domestic students enrolling in professional courses. (Future Campus – 16 October)



**Staying Positive About COVID Changes by Stephen Matchett.** The pandemic changed the way academics teach, but will new approaches stick?

Jaclyn Broadbent and Deakin U colleagues asked academics and found they can, if staff think they are worth it. They found that people positive about the changes that COVID lockdowns imposed on teaching were most likely to stick with them.

'Without a positive attitude, it is unlikely to matter how much others are doing or how much control you perceive yourself as having; it will not influence behaviour to change,' the authors wrote.

The areas that teachers might look at to assess whether change is worth it are student learning outcomes, engagement or workload.

Nor does age influence attitudes, 'teachers at any stage of their career are equally likely to maintain change.'

Overall, 'if organisations want to make changes with academics, they must make strong and persuasive cases' and that can

depend on a university's leadership and culture. (Future Campus – 16 October)



**TEQSA announces action in the Federal Court against Chegg,** ('from your first assignment to your final exam, get the right tools designed to help you learn.'). The regulator alleges Chegg contravened 2020 laws that prohibit providing, offering to provide or arranging for a third party to provide an academic cheating service to an HE student. In May last year TEQSA wrote to HE providers asking about 'any concerns,' particularly with Chegg Expert Q&A. Chegg has already taken TEQSA to the court, requesting a judicial review., which considers whether the agency correctly applied the law in making a decision. A case management review of that matter is scheduled for Monday. In what appears a fear of being ignored, training regulator ASQA announced next day (via X) that, 'as a member of the Global Academic Integrity Network (GAIN), we stand up against academic dishonesty.' (Future Campus – 18 October)

**Just before the first anniversary of September 7, the National Tertiary Education Union** adopted an institutional academic boycott of Israel and will support members implementing it, 'within the principles and practices of academic and intellectual freedom.' The union will also call on Universities Australia to condemn, 'the destruction of all Gazan universities by the Israeli government and decrying scholasticide.' (Future Campus – 18 October)

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**Online Exams Get Thumbs Up from Students by Tim Winkler**. Australian university students are generally positive about online exams and gripes often relate to assessment design rather than the online assessment platform, according to a new study.

A new paper on the impact of online exams in HE, authored by academics from Monash, Deakin, Charles Sturt, RMIT, Torrens and UQ, analysed the views of more than 13,700 students surveyed about the impact of online exams, which are becoming increasingly common.

While the authors noted that online assessment and security measures could have a negative impact on student wellbeing and performance, the majority reported they were happy with digital tests.

Online exams became common during the pandemic, and are still employed by many institutions.

'Examinations are often a stressful experience for many students. The introduction of new platforms, processes, technology requirements and security measures could be an opportunity to explore how we might alleviate stress and positively impact student experience. However, it is perhaps more plausible that the additional layers of complexity, especially those related to security, are more likely to exacerbate negative experiences,' the authors wrote.

While students generally were in favour of online exams, the authors reported a 'startling' number of negative comments about technology, with more than 2,300 students taking the time to complain about technological issues such as software not working or an inability to upload formulas or handwritten notes.

Key insights from the paper included:

- Design matters – the quality and relevance of assessment designs had a critical bearing on the experience of students undertaking online exams.
- Talk it up – 'Institutions can reduce the wide range of negative impacts through improved communication and in-exam support.'
- Students have the answers in more ways than one – co-design of exam platforms with students enabled system developers to create exam environments with fewer bugbears for users.

The authors said the number of complaints relating to assessment design, 'highlights that higher education educators may be specialists in their fields but may not have depth of knowledge around assessment design. Institutions implementing online examinations need to maintain a strong focus on staff development.' (Future Campus – 21 October)



**What COVID Taught Us About International Student Wellbeing by Stephen Matchett**. Amid all the consternation over caps, a new paper has emerged with the reminder that international student wellbeing is the true

cornerstone of Australia's international education appeal.

Catherine Gomes (RMIT) **suggests** that international student mobility scholarship evaluation should extend to student wellbeing, because the COVID pandemic 'fundamentally changed' their 'expectations and aspirations.'

On the basis of previous studies, including the COVID experience of Internationals in Australia, she presents issues, which appear to establish a context for more work on wellbeing, including:

- Friends: pre-COVID, Internationals befriended each other, 'because of the commonality of experience' – but those with Australian friends were better informed on life outside study. The small group without either were alone before the pandemic, which 'normalised' their experience.
- Personal challenges: the disruptions of the pandemic were especially hard for Internationals, dealing with the same disruptions and discord as Australians, but without the support of family and community. Gomes cites the experiences of two students who participated in a 2021 study as an illustration of how tough it was for many.
- Coping: 'there was no template on dealing with the suspension of the international student experience itself.' However, Gomes records how Internationals coped, for example the PhD student from Africa who created a Zoom community based on music from home.

The takeout: 'in the case of Australia, in particular, incorporating the wellbeing turn in ISM scholarship recognises what the international sector has already known – that taking care of international student wellbeing improves this country's reputation and global competitiveness as an international student destination.' (Future Campus – 21 October)

**ACU Graduation Walkout by Tim Winkler**. After decades of careful brand building at ACU, the University's reputation for inclusivity received a battering at the hands of graduation organisers on Monday, when they handed the microphone for the graduation address honour to staunch conservative unionist Joe de Bruyn.

Hundreds of graduands and staff walked out of Monday's graduation ceremony in protest at the speech by former union leader Joe de Bruyn, which condemned





gay marriage and said abortions worldwide killed more annually than World War II. Those walking out included many staff involved in the academic procession, who were seated on stage.

Mr de Bruyn was invited to deliver the address after receiving an honorary doctorate in recognition of his contribution to workers, education and welfare.

For an institution that has spent tens of millions of dollars over decades in building an image of inclusivity, picking a delicate path between occasional culture clashes Catholic heritage and the determination to foster a liberal, inclusive culture, the address was a body blow to the University's reputation.

Mr de Bruyn has made his position clear on a range of social issues as hard-line leader of the Shop, Distributive and Allied Employees Association. The University emphasised that the comments were made in a personal capacity.

Staff and students have spoken out publicly to condemn Mr de Bruyn's speech.

'Graduation is a special day and it's important to us that our graduates and their families have a positive experience,' an ACU spokesperson said.

'The university understands that many of our staff, graduates and their families disagreed with the content of Mr de Bruyn's speech and we regret that this occurred.

'ACU is committed to providing a safe, inclusive and respectful environment for students and staff of all beliefs. Education, faith, respect and acceptance are at the heart of our mission as a Catholic university.'

Students and staff yesterday protested against the speech, calling for an apology from the university, a repudiation of his views and revocation of Mr de Bruyn's honorary doctorate.

A graduation ceremony is a challenging time to test the potential conflict between the University's commitment to freedom of expression while also maintaining inclusive and respectful environments. The one certainty is that national headlines exposing fissures in an inclusive culture are likely to do little to assist 2025 enrolments. (Future Campus – 23 October)

**Jason Clare Bingo – Play along at Home by Tim Winkler.** Right now, after some years of slog, it would be possible to argue that Education Minister is one of the easiest jobs in Australian politics.

For his first couple of years in office, he pushed to address sexual assault and staff underpayment on campus – rightly identifying two important issues that had been widely mishandled.

That crusade left campus leaders in a bind – unable to criticise because they were being called out for their own, highly-publicised errors, and yet also a little bit in love with the smooth speeches from the Member for Blaxland, who was promising to transform the sector so it would be better for all, with his long-awaited Accord.

Having done the hard yards and launched the Accord to an admiring sector in early 2024, he and the rest of the front bench were presumably confronted, by party polling which said the survival of the government depended on being seen to act on cost of living, which had suddenly become a bigger issue than Gaza, climate change or pretty much anything for much of middle Australia.

Bashing the supermarkets helped let off a little steam, but the politics of otherness has repeatedly trumped most other base causes in Australian politics, whether you think of the Tampa election, the reds under the beds, the White Australia Policy or dozens of other micro issues in the electoral cycle. There are votes in singling out a group of people and blaming them.

While grocery prices are bad, rent hikes and housing availability is worse, meaning the Government grasped not just for constructive policy initiatives, but also a blame-based defensive strategy.

Housing policy in Australia is a shambles – we have some of the most expensive housing in the world compared to average incomes; a chronic shortage of builders and tradies (130,000 workers short this year), the CFMEU building union has been devastated by bullying and corruption allegations and is in administration and we currently have the lowest number of new homes being built in more than a decade.

Despite this evidence, the Government then found the furious, housing-

aggrieved public a useful scapegoat in international students, saying they were to blame for high rents – with a supporting chorus from the Opposition.

The Education Minister's job is made easier, because the alternative Government led by Peter Dutton want to cut international student numbers even deeper and Mr Dutton has described international students as 'the modern day version of boat arrivals.' FYI, from a man who built his political career championing action to stop the boats, this is not a compliment.

The Property Council, National Housing Supply and Affordability Council and many others called out the claim, leading the Department of Education to try to ride to the rescue, releasing a fact sheet that indicated a link between international student rental demand and affordability in some suburbs particularly inner city Melbourne and Sydney. Not quite enough to justify the 'boat people' tag, but a valiant attempt in comms terms, nonetheless.

Which brings us to this week. Mr Clare's job is to blame international students for Australia's housing woes to justify drastic and rapid cuts to international student enrolments. The intent is to show that the Government is achieving policy success by singling out a marginalised group who won't trouble the government electorally, managing to balance the apparent contradiction of welcoming hundreds of thousands of international students still enrolled next year, while simultaneously saying they are the root cause of Australia's ills and their compatriots are strictly banned. This would be challenging if there was a reward for messaging coherence in Australian politics across audiences, but it appears there is not.

With many of the serious reform challenges of the Accord appearing to be pushed beyond the electoral horizon, and a few crumbs from next year's budget kept aside to maintain an illusion of meaningful reform, Mr Clare, an outstanding political performer, has an all too easy job; continuing to point out the sector's failings to itself and keeping a 'tough on shonks' persona ready for the electorate.

Which brings us to this week.

This week, Mr Clare has agreed to address the juggernaut that is the AIEC conference. Assuming we take a paint-by-the-numbers approach to speech development, we have prepared a bingo





card predictor for the likely messaging (AIEC punters are going to be set against or secretly in love with Mr Clare depending on the caps levied to their institution, so no need to try to convert anyone). When all boxes are ticked, yell 'Show us your polling,' or start thinking of useful ways to repurpose printed copies of the Accord as an origami exhibition.

Jason Clare bingo

Bold predictions of what you (might) hear from the Education Minister this week:

- A lot has happened since I was here last year...
- We realise this has been a challenging time for you which is why we have consulted ...
- (insert complimentary reference to programs from pro-cap unis – esp Newcastle, Tasmania, Wollongong)
- 'Shonky' providers – who are partly to blame for the caps (ie people not in the room)
- The Coalition let too many students in and we are fixing it
- The Albanese Government is restoring balance
- Rankings don't matter, it's what universities do for Australian communities that matter
- More people from western Sydney need to have the chance to have 'a crack'
- Universities are losing their social licence and the government is saving them
- Universities and TAFEs are 'agents for change'
- Growing up in Western Sydney I...
- I am the first person in my family to finish high school...
- International students are critical to Australia's future, but...
- The Coalition want to cut even more and
- Peter Dutton called them 'boat arrivals.' (Our side are much more polite).

(Future Campus – 23 October)



### TNE Exempted from Caps by Tim

Winkler. Universities will be able to enrol international students above the caps – as long as those students study at least 39% of their courses offshore.

In a [factsheet](#) released by the Department of Education this week, the department said that:

- Transnational education programs delivered entirely offshore are not subject to caps;
- Transnational education programs that include a combination of onshore and offshore study will be exempt from caps as long as they are:
- Part of a HE award study program
- Co-delivered by an Australian provider and registered with the in-country authority offshore;
- No more than 60% of the program is completed in Australia and
- The delivery arrangement was in place prior to 1 July 2024, or has subsequently been approved by the department.

This is significant indeed. While caps and talk of caps are anticipated to have dimmed enthusiasm for the nation's education offerings, institutions can build unlimited numbers of international students above their current caps, as long as they promise to only host the student onshore for 60% or less of the program time – ie 21 out of 36 months of a three year program, or 14 of 24 units.

Universities with existing twinning programs will be ramping up enrolments and re-examining fee structures as we speak.

Luckily, students staying in Australia for only a year and a half won't add to the nation's rental crisis at all. The Government's rationale for caps only appears to apply to those who are lucky enough to win a spot studying their full course in Australia. Presumably the main surge in TNE enrolments will be seen after the next election, meaning that logic and policy don't need to be common bedfellows for the time being. (Future Campus – 25 October)



### With around 1,000 university staff set to lose their contract or ongoing jobs (not to mention an uncounted number of

sessional staff), bystanders are in a race to apportion blame, with Universities Australia citing Labour's maintenance of the hated JRG funding formula and university caps as key hits to revenue, while Education Minister Jason Clare is seeking to divert attention from revenue

restraints and instead focus on spending, reportedly promising an Expert Council on University Governance would start work before Christmas.

The University of Canberra this week flagged it will cut 200 jobs and significantly reduce its executive numbers after revealing a \$50 million fiscal black hole.

Interim Vice-Chancellor Professor Stephen Parker, appointed to tidy up before Albanese Government Minister Bill Shorten ascends to the UC helm in February, announced that around 200 jobs would have to go as the University had allowed spending to balloon beyond its means.

'The University itself is responsible for this unsustainable position. We cannot expect any external assistance and must take urgent and significant measures to re-balance the institution. There is no point in blaming others,' Professor Parker said.

Staff cuts would be implemented this year and in the first half of 2025, through a combination of not filling vacancies, expiring contracts and redundancies. The cuts come hot on the heels of 650 proposed job losses at ANU, and at least 50 job losses at James Cook University in Townsville. (Future Campus – 25 October)



### ACU's graduation walkout on Monday attracted national headlines that likely sent shivers through the ranks of the

university's beancounters who had previously been assuming a solid 2025 enrolment yield. However, a combined statement by the ACU NTEU branch, LGBTIQ+ Staff Ally Network, National Student Association, St Patrick's Student Association and the ACU Melbourne LGBTIQ+ Society indicated the depths of internal concern over the decision to hand the graduation address to Joe de Bruyn. The statement cited staff reports that ACU counselling staff were organised to be on hand at the Graduation in advance of the ceremony and that a year before, staff were instructed to remove rainbow flags from the library.

The coalition of groups went well beyond industrial – citing last month's 16th Ordinary General Assembly of the Synod of Bishops in Rome where the Catholic Church recognised the damage of '[using doctrine as stones to be hurled](#).'



'Far from defending Catholic teaching, ACU has allowed de Bryun to hurl Church teaching at staff and students so as to cause harm and scandal. This is counter to the Catholic intellectual tradition and a betrayal of the richness of ACU's identity as both public and Catholic.'

This is a thoughtful statement, worth noting for other groups seeking a voice. Far from rejecting Catholicism or ACU; staff and students are seeking to reclaim and redefine the university brand. 'We stand for the ACU Mission – for 'the dignity of the human person and the common good.'

The University wrote to students apologising for the distress caused and offering a refund of the \$165 graduation fee to attendees as well as free counselling to all students. The university confirmed that it was aware of Mr de Bryun's speech in advance and asked him to reconsider it prior to delivery. (Future Campus – 25 October)



**Early Offers Don't Diminish Year 12 Results – Study by Tim Winkler.** Analysis of UAC data indicates there is little evidence to suggest that Year 12 students slack off after locking in early offers to uni.

Early Offers have been closely regulated, particularly in NSW, following concerns that the proliferation of early offers was harming Year 12 performance – the theory being that students stopped trying after securing a place in their desired course.

A **study of 1,500 students** conducted by UAC and NSW found little evidence that ATARs were affected by early offer applications – and in fact those that received an early offer felt that they were freed to perform better in their final Year 12 exams, according to UNSW Professor Andrew Martin.

The study compared the results of students who had applied for and received an early offer, those that applied for and didn't receive an early offer and those who did not apply.

More than 500 of the students were surveyed in term 2 and 4 of their Year 12 studies – finding that early offers had no impact on motivation, effort, burnout or mental health.

'We did find one statistically significant effect. Those receiving an early offer scored about 10% higher in academic buoyancy than the other two groups,' Professor Martin said.

'Our study suggests receiving an early offer for university does not make much of a difference to final outcomes.' (Future Campus – 28 October)



**Unpacking the Lives of Casual Academics by Tim Winkler.** With Jason Clare last week reiterating his commitment to take a closer look at workforce data relating to casual staff, a new paper examining the trials and tribulations of the nation's often-invisible casual HE workforce should attract much interest.

Griffith U's Ellie Meissner and colleagues from Griffith, Monash, Macquarie and psychologists in private practice dive into the lived experience of casual academics **in the paper**, seeking to understand the impact of precarious employment on the perceived mental health.

'Academia in Australia is in crisis as increased neoliberalism, casualization of staff and the pressure for more research output has potentially jeopardized the cornerstone of any educational

institution: its staff,' the authors state.

Whether casual academics developed a sense of belonging depending on a range of individual circumstances and institutional factors, the authors found – with not only institutions, but also full-time colleagues sometimes being responsible for exclusion.

'The casual academics in our study commented that they felt undervalued by the institutions, but also by their full-time counterparts because of traditionalist mindsets. Considering

the institutional environment, the lived experience of casual academics is one of 'isolation', 'misunderstanding', and 'lack of support',' the authors said.

Even though academics may not feel part of an institution, some did feel a connection to the wider academic community, and others focused on the strength of relationships with students, providing alternative avenues for belonging and identity.

Many casual academics involved in the study discussed the mental health toll of having to continuously try to achieve a work life balance while also securing future employment, generating feelings of powerlessness and burnout. Another consistent theme was lacking a voice as they attempted to tackle unachievable marking deadlines or unreasonable expectations in relation to responding to students – with the expectation, 'being paid for a limited number of hours/days per week but also being expected to be working 24/7.'

While staff dependent on the income from sessional work exhibited stress and mental health impacts, the study found that it could be a rewarding job for those who had additional income streams, and for these people, 'the perception of work stress, mental health and wellbeing outcomes were much less pronounced.'

The paper provides practical recommendations in relation to policies relating to casual work, noting the importance of sessional staff to the sector.

'This study supports the reconsideration of the structure of university contracts to create a more equitable and secure environment for casual academics, so they can perform their tasks to the fullest of their ability while also safeguarding their mental health,' the authors conclude. (Future Campus – 28 October)



**HR Systems Critical to Attracting Future Talent by Tim Winkler.** Human Resources Management (HRM) systems are critical if Universities are to attract and retain outstanding staff in future.

A **new paper** by Fiona Archontoulis, Keith Townsend and Griffith's Rebecca Loudoun notes that HRM systems must effectively control workload allocation and effective frontline management of staff time was critical to the health and wellbeing of academics – and the attraction of future staff.

The researchers interviewed 20 staff involved in academic management roles in Australian institutions and found a wide range of management approaches on display.

Key takeouts



- Lack of training was an issue. 'Many FLMs (Front Line Managers) said they did not have the necessary management skills and training to be effective supervisors.'
- Leaders were thrust into their role on a rotational or voluntary basis and just felt like one of the team, knowing they would return to their academic role before long. 'Many FLMs identified as academics rather than as managers despite their management responsibilities.'
- Systems often were not relevant to academic workforce management.
- Frontline managers reported negative impacts on their health and wellbeing, caught between demands of senior management and empathy with their colleagues.

The report provides a range of suggestions to improve the lot of frontline managers, indicating that better systems were key to improved performance and staff retention outcomes. (Future Campus – 30 October)



**Growing solutions to Food Security on Campus by Tim Winkler.** Urban agriculture, practiced at the micro level on university campuses can help not only educate students about nutrition but also provide them with food as they struggle to deal with the cost of living.

UNSW's Sophia Lin and colleagues from UNSW and Macquarie have [published new perspectives](#) about the potential of campus food gardens to alleviate the hunger of students while also helping them learn how to feed themselves.

There is a 'growing phenomenon of hunger in affluent nations among vulnerable groups, such as university students,' the authors note.

'Universities recognise food insecurity as a major student welfare issue but have traditionally limited interventions to providing emergency food relief, vouchers for basic foods, temporary fiscal support.' While useful, these are not sustainable, so the authors looked at opportunities to improve food literacy of students while also feeding them through campus food gardens.

Research with Australian students had previously indicated that low levels of nutrition education often correlated with

low food security. Produce from food gardens used by canteens on campus could help lower food costs for staff and students, and universities with large areas of underutilised land were in a strong position to build up campus gardens.

The researchers found relatively little research on urban agriculture and the potential environmental and social benefits of growing food in urban locations were being overlooked by universities and governments alike.

'Campus gardens exemplify a transformation-focused approach to education, appropriate for students at a formative stage of their lives,' the authors conclude.

'Universities that are serious about teaching SDG 2, as well as meeting its targets for their own populations, would do well to support and fund campus gardens.' (Future Campus – 30 October)



**Alarm at International Enrolment Trends by Tim Winkler.** International enrolment caps are not justified by analysis of enrolment trends and are highly likely to damage the sector's world-class assets, according to new analysis.

In addition, an over reliance on attracting 61% of students from just two countries had left the country's higher education sector vulnerable.

Analysis of enrolment data from 2005-2023 [released yesterday by Emeritus Professor Frank Larkins](#), indicates that while China and India account for more than 60% of 2023 enrolments, there had been an alarming narrowing of source markets, with 96% of international students in 2023 coming from just 13 nations.

Over almost two decades there has been a significant decline in enrolments from many near neighbours, such as Indonesia, Thailand, Japan, Malaysia, Singapore, South Korea, Hong Kong and Taiwan.

'The introduction of caps will not help to arrest these disturbing trends,' Professor Larkins said.

Caps on enrolments at Sydney, Melbourne and Monash would reduce fee revenue by around \$160 million, even if

full enrolment is achieved, Professor Larkins writes.

If every university managed to fill their enrolment caps, the net loss to the sector would be \$51 million in fees, but actual fee losses would be far greater, due to the challenges that regional universities would have in filling caps and unfilled places at numerous universities, he said.

'There appears to be no clear pattern of government decision-making behind the imposition of the 2025 intake changes on universities.' Professor Larkins said. There had been strong growth in student numbers from Nepal, Philippines, Pakistan, Vietnam and Sri Lanka between 2005 and 2023.

The Analysis examined the number of international students at each university that were excluded from the Government's cap measures, on account of them enrolling in an offshore campus or being enrolled in HDR studies, finding that RMIT led the pack with 7,297 international students enrolled in 2023 who would be excluded from the 2025 caps, followed by Monash with 5,326 and VU with 4,353.

'The role of Australian universities in contributing to Australia's engagement with overseas countries, especially those in our region has been exceptional,' Professor Larkins said.

'Education exports rank fourth nationally and higher in some states and result from the intellectual capacity of staff and the world class resources available to our universities for teaching and research.

'There is a high probability that these assets will be compromised by the ongoing actions of the federal government, especially in terms of the declining proportion of core funding provided to universities and restrictions now imposed on the capacity of a university to raise discretionary income.'

The paper is a masterclass in policy analysis and will do little to quell concern over the sagacity and strategy of Federal higher education policy. (Future Campus – 1 November)



**Hacked Again – New Data Breach at Western Sydney by Tim Winkler.** Western Sydney has experienced its second major data breach for the year,





with the University yesterday announcing that a hacker accessed its Student Management System and the University's Data Warehouse in August.

The hacker gained access to the system on 14 August and was not detected until 27 August, accessing, 'names, addresses, University-issued email addresses, student identification numbers, tuition fee information (including fees deferred to HELP/HECS), student admission and enrolment data (including subject, results and progression information), and student demographic data (including nationality, Indigenous status, country of birth, citizenship status, gender and date of birth)'.

The University is [still investigating](#) the hack alongside police, and conceded that additional personal information may also have been accessed, however it has confirmed that no student records appear to have been altered.

[Around 7,500 individuals were affected](#) by a breach of the University's Isilon storage platform in January, with around 580 terabytes of data accessed across 83 of 400 storage directories. The first hack was revealed in May,

'On behalf of the University, I unreservedly apologise for this incident and the impact it is having on our community,' Vice-Chancellor George Williams said.

'We are committed to supporting our students, staff and stakeholders, and have several support services in place.'

The University has not received any threats in relation to the breach and has promised ongoing upgrades to cyber security. (Future Campus – 1 November)



[The courses that students have chosen as their first preference tend to change relatively little year-to-year](#), but when you are examining the first preferences of 64,500 early bird applicants to UAC, [even a small movement can mean a big change for some disciplines](#).

IT stands out this year – despite the perennial advance of technology, IT courses have declined from 4.7% of students in 2023 to 4% this year – one fifth of the number choosing to study society & culture. Health remains the discipline leader, attracting just over one

out of every four first preferences and management and commerce has earned a respectable bounce in popularity from 12.3% to 13.4%.

Gender still is a strong determinant of course choice, with female applicants far more likely to choose health or society & culture, while male applicants are still far more likely in IT, Engineering and Management & Commerce. Almost 57% of Year 12 applicants were female. (Future Campus – 1 November)



[University of Southern Queensland VC Geraldine Mackenzie has decided to add herself to the exit queue](#) from Toowoomba, electing to retire following a vote of no confidence from union members. Professor Mackenzie said she had been planning her retirement for some time and was looking forward to spending more time with her family. The University faces a deficit of \$32 million and the NTEU claims 60 jobs have already been culled, prior to Professor Mackenzie's departure. The University's Provost, Professor Karen Nelson, will act as Vice-Chancellor while the Uni SQ Council undertake a search. (Future Campus – 1 November)

[Attorney-General Mark Dreyfus and Education Minister Jason Clare have referred antisemitism at Australian universities](#) to the Parliamentary Joint Committee on Human Rights. The inquiry will work alongside the Human Rights Commission, the Special Envoys to combat antisemitism and islamophobia and will set the scene for the National Student Ombudsman. The inquiry adds to Government pressure on campuses and will help it to build a narrative that governance and management of higher education is failing and requires a government overhaul. The inquiry is interesting in its scope – no requirement to look at what is going on in VET and no time spent looking at all other groups subject to discrimination. The decision by masked student activists videoed themselves occupying the office of University of Melbourne physics researcher Professor Steven Praver last month caused widespread alarm and may have been one of last straws leading to the inquiry. (Future Campus – 1 November)

[20% Off Debt – But no JRG Change by Tim Winkler](#). In a big weekend pitch to

the 3 million Australians carrying student debt, the Albanese Government has promised to cut 20% off all student loans from 1 June 2025.

The \$16 billion debt cut, adding to the \$3 billion cut as a result of indexation changes in the May Budget is a clever pitch in a space where the government has been found wanting – non-inflationary cost of living relief for younger Australians. They might not be able to buy a house, but their debt burden is suddenly looking better.

The Government also proposes to change repayments for HELP, VET Student Loan and other students loans, raising the minimum repayment threshold from \$54,000 to \$67,000. This is an interesting play – many outlets rushed to broadcast the annual saving to graduates without looking at whether students will ultimately pay more, as a result of paying the loan off more slowly, or why the Government has opted for this reform instead of booting out the hated and almost universally condemned Job Ready Graduates pricing plan for degrees – which sent humanities degrees in particular through the roof and failed to make significant dents on student course selection.

The true cost of embracing student debt cuts and repayment changes while leaving course pricing untouched is not yet clear, but for further insights into the impact of the repayment reform, look no further than Australia's supreme leader in HE Policy, Andrew Norton, who has burned the weekend oil to explain what it could mean for graduates at different income levels in his blog.

The most significant elements of the Accord – widening participation by a million additional students, give or take – remain largely untouched and certainly unfunded, but in challenging economic times the Government knows where its bread is buttered.

Schooling the sector in how to engage with Australians on issues that they care about, the Government has put forward a valuable and valued policy that young Australians will care about, and many may vote for. If you are sitting in your graduate job on \$70,000, wondering whether or not that degree was really worth it, the news that you are going to have your debt cut by 20% and an extra \$1300 a year in your pocket to spend as you like as a result of these reforms is seriously attractive.



Australia may not have a major party capable of a coherent long-term higher education policy, but they certainly could teach us a thing or two in recognising the primal voting instincts of our oft-neglected students and graduates. (Future Campus – 4 November)



**Mandatory Curriculum Change for Teachers by Tim Winkler.** Universities will have to overhaul teaching courses to include mandatory standardised national curriculum, Education Minister Jason Clare has announced.

The **Professional Experience Guidelines** for initial teacher education have been developed by the Australian Institute of Teaching and School Leadership, creating a national core curriculum which must be implemented by the end of 2025.

'The new guidelines will support a consistent national approach to professional experience, while being able to be adopted and adapted to each jurisdiction's context,' according to the statement announcing the change.

'The guidelines clarify roles and responsibilities, improve consistency, and reduce administrative burden for initial teacher education providers, education systems, schools, early childhood settings and teacher regulatory authorities.'

Mr Clare said Australia needed more teachers and one step to address that was to ensure more students had positive experiences in teaching pracs – with research showing that students were more likely to complete their degree, transition to teaching and stay in teaching for the longer term if they had a positive prac experience. (Future Campus – 4 November)

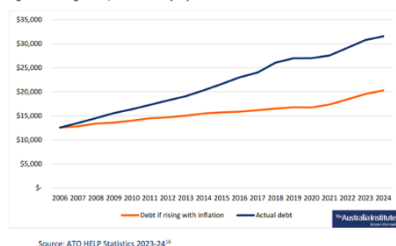


**New Signals on Student Debt by Tim Winkler.** Media speculation that the Federal Government is considering forgiving or reducing ballooning levels of HECS-HELP as an inflation-friendly way of providing cost of living relief to under 35s is bolstered by a report from the Australia Institute, pointing out the rising cost of HE.

The '**University is expensive**' report is a useful reminder that Generation X graduates who control the purse strings of some institutions and parts of government had it easy, relatively, when HECS was first introduced in 1989.

HE has far exceeded the rate of inflation and the prices of other goods since 2011 and HECS-HELP debts for people in their 20's have more than doubled between 2006 and 2024, rising from \$12,600 to \$31,500.

Figure 3: Average HECS/HELP debt of people in their 20s



Nine newspapers reported that the Albanese government was actively considering cutting student debt by tens of thousands of dollars in current fiscal deliberations. The Federal Government wiped \$3 billion off student loans in the May Budget. (Future Campus – 4 November)



**Southern Cross Shuttters Creative Arts by Tim Winkler.** Southern Cross University has terminated degrees in contemporary music, art and design and digital media and will no longer offer a standalone Bachelor of Arts.

Vice-Chancellor Professor Tyrone Carlin told the ABC that declining demand meant that the university could no longer provide the degree, with Arts only offered as a double degree paired with the Bachelor of Education.

Despite the discipline loss, Professor Carlin said Southern Cross had seen an increase in demand for health, exercise, sports science, teaching and diploma programs.

In a statement, the university said demand for creative arts courses had steadily declined in recent years and recognised that it had, 'a long history of providing creative degrees in the NSW Northern Rivers region.'

The decision has caused widespread dismay in the Northern Rivers, with arts leaders saying the decision was a

significant blow to Lismore and its creative community.

Associate Professor Charles Robb, a Board Member of the Australian Council of University Art & Design Schools said the closure signalled 'a national crisis in arts education.'

'This isn't about natural market forces – it's the direct result of misguided policies that fail to recognise how the arts enrich our society through cultural, social and personal contributions – as well as their economic ones,' Associate Professor Robb said.

The University said it remained 'fully committed' to education in Lismore and 'remains focused on areas where it can deliver the most value to students, staff, and the wider community.' (Future Campus – 4 November)



**UoW to Make History History? By Tim Winkler.** A total of 137 staff are likely to lose their jobs at the University of Wollongong in the latest round of university cuts, with the potential to cut whole disciplines, including history.

Interim Vice-Chancellor John Dewar released the University's latest change proposal on Monday, identifying 25 disciplines that could be deleted or downsized. While consultation is underway, individual staff received letters informing them their jobs were under consideration for the chopping block, with the university seeking to shed the equivalent of 90 full-time positions, shaving \$15-20 million off the UoW wages bill.

Professor Dewar said the changes were essential to achieve long-term financial sustainability, despite the new revenue streams the University is set to unlock with its new campus in Gujrat, India, which is able to take uncapped international student enrolments when it opens to FinTech and IT students this month.

'There are some areas of the University with low student enrolment where we can no longer justify maintaining our current levels of staffing. This proposal aims to address that,' Professor Dewar said.

The National Tertiary Education Union's (NTEU) Damien Cahill, slammed the cuts.



'I think this will be a devastating blow to its reputation and its image,' Dr Cahill told the ABC.

'A university without a history department or a university that can't properly teach maths or science.

'Cutting jobs in these areas and potentially cutting whole departments could have a serious impact on the university's ability to continue to offer a broad range of subjects into the future.' (Future Campus – 6 November)



### [Measuring How HE Institutions Drive Local Economic Growth by Tim Winkler.](#)

In the long-running and so far one-sided debate between the two major parties and the sector over the relevance and so-called social licence of the sector to operate, facts are mostly scarce.

All the more reason then, to set five minutes aside to peruse a recent [Brazilian paper](#) which seeks to quantify the impact of human capital produced by higher education institutions on local economic growth. In lay terms – how much are your graduates worth to the community?

Examining 37 public higher education institutions and 166 private institutions in northeastern Brazil, Leilyanne Viana Nogueira and Professor Felipe de Sousa Basos found a positive correlation between the efficiency of public institutions and local economic growth.

The authors noted that universities delivered more than human capital – for example also enhancing social capacity, but focused their model on comparing university efficiency (including number of graduates, student participation in extracurricular activity and student course evaluations) with local economic strength.

The modelling revealed, 'evidence of a positive association between the teaching activities of public universities.' However there was not a significant correlation for smaller private universities and no observed relationship between research activity and growth.

The authors said the findings underlined the importance of Government focus on higher education quality.

An Australian version of this study, examining the relationship between

universities and tangible measures of wealth or social benefit would certainly be valuable in demonstrating the value of higher education to Australian voters. (Future Campus – 6 November)



### [ANU Subsidiary Hacked by Tim Winkler.](#)

ANU Enterprise is the latest HE group to be hacked, with an unspecified amount of data stolen in the heist reported to be by the 3AM Ransomware group.

An ANU spokesperson confirmed that its' wholly-owned subsidiary, set up to maximise research revenue, was recently hacked.

'The incident resulted in the encryption and exfiltration of some files stored on the ANU Enterprise IT Systems,' the spokesperson said.

'All individuals and organisations impacted by this incident have been notified and no ransom was paid to resolve this matter.'

The University said all impacted systems and files had been fully restored, and there was no impact on the University's IT systems, which operate separately.

The hacking event follows Western Sydney's revelation of its' second hack of the year.

ANU has not yet disclosed the number of files stolen, the size of the breach, the number of people and/or business partners affected or the nature of the information exfiltrated. (Future Campus – 6 November)



### [Delay to Fixed-Term Contract Laws by Tim Winkler.](#)

The Federal Government has delayed the implementation of new laws restricting the use of fixed-term contracts within the Higher Education sector.

The Australian Higher Education Industrial Association (AHEIA) welcomed the decision, pleased that the Government had listened to the protestations of institutions and recognised that at least 25 Australian universities were in deficit in 2023, compared to just seven in 2017.

'Present legislation could add millions to the operating costs of each university. Furthermore, they will cost jobs and already there is evidence that some universities are paring back employment numbers based on what is being proposed by the Federal Government,' AHEIA boss Craig Laughton said.

Mr Laughton said implementation of fixed-term contracts would not occur until 1 November 2025. (Future Campus – 6 November)



### [Key HE Lessons From Trump Victory by Tim Winkler.](#)

Donald Trump startled many in snatching back the keys to the White House this week, with some significant implications for Australian HE.

The manner and magnitude of Trump's victory and the outspoken rhetoric of his ticket in seeking to 'destroy' and/or 'reclaim' universities and heavily tax their financial reserves has significant implications here, particularly with an Australian election imminent in 2025.

While Western Sydney VC George Williams and a few other voices have pointed to the need for universities to reframe their relationship with the community in recent months, a much larger commitment will be required if the sector is to stave off the types of extreme intervention that appears to be electorally mandated for Trump's next term.

1. If we weren't convinced that caps were locked in for at least a couple of years, then we should be now. In case it wasn't already obvious across many jurisdictions and eras, there are clearly votes to be harvested when blaming immigrants for a nation's woes. We may not be about to finish building a wall, but we don't need to – both major parties have already flagged the importance of appearing 'muscular' in cutting down immigration numbers in their pre-election warm up. Expect international students to carry the can for rent prices from Quambatook to Tangambalanga – evidence is clearly no longer essential to build political capital.
2. Higher education domestic fees, university thriftiness and student debt are major issues. At a time when cost of living trumps (pun intended) all else for voters, even our





long term existence on the planet, the cost of degrees is going to keep being an issue. In a mid-year poll for New American, US residents offered divergent views on higher ed, but all agreed the price of a degree was too high. While the JRG doesn't appear to be well enough understood for anyone to put pressure on the actual price of degrees, the wise expenditure of fee revenue, university governance failures and student debt will all be significant political issues.

3. If the sector is ever going to understand the need to write its own narrative, it needs to happen now. A Gallup poll in the US and the New American poll both showed deep divisions between political conservatives who distrusted and often devalued or disliked higher education, and the progressive side of politics who still thinks degrees are the bees knees (because they mostly have one already). HE institutions need to rapidly find ways to prove they are relevant and valuable to middle Australia, or risk being caught by offshoots of America's anti-university culture wars. At present, the sector is a collective choir of conscripts without a songsheet. A more vulnerable political position is difficult to imagine – until you look at the US and realise it could be so much worse (see point 4).
4. It's a great time to hire staff from the US. Sure, lots of Australian universities are facing tough times right now, but that's going to look insignificant if JD Vance lives up to his rhetoric. In 2021 he proposed to destroy the universities' and he has riffed on similar, albeit slightly less dramatic actions on HE in the campaign, sheeting a significant chunk of the blame for America's ills home to higher ed. He has already attempted to lift the tax on Harvard's endowment from 1.4% to 35% – a move now likely as Republicans move towards controlling the Capitol as well as the White House. The future of US University endowments is now very much under threat, challenging the funding of the entire sector. Trump has promised to take HE on directly, 'reclaiming universities' and promising to 'fire the radical left accreditors that have allowed our colleges to become dominated by Marxist maniacs.' It is a bleak, bleak four years ahead for US universities.

5. International partnerships, recruitment and defence contracts are less certain. It is not the time to bet the Vice-Chancellery on submarine courses, lest The Donald decide to rip up AUKUS, but US action on tariffs, foreign policy and immigration is likely to create opportunities as well as challenges for international collaboration.

Strategies revolving around sitting-on-hands until everyone works out what is happening next year worked for many institutions during COVID, but are no longer an option. If Australian higher education institutions want a chance to wrest back some control over their destinies, sector leaders need to convince communities of their institution's role and value, before the conservative antipathy to higher education institutions takes root internationally. (Future Campus – 8 November)



#### **Sandy Bay Stand Off by Stephen**

**Matchett**. After years of failure to overcome change-resistance, the University of Tasmania proposes scaling back its plan to move almost entirely to the Hobart CBD, funded by selling its existing Sandy Bay site for housing. It's another manoeuvre in a five-year plus push to transform the university from a traditional campus to multi-sites embedded in the city.

But the proposal to sell some city-property and for STEM subjects to stay in a new development at Sandy Bay, contingent on federal funding, will reduce but not remove the university's plan to create a CBD and surrounds campus.

The city move is long opposed by Sandy Bay residents who do not want more neighbours and past and present university staff and some students. Critics claim the university's concession is not enough. While management proposes selling some city sites it wants to keep existing facilities for teaching in town and to move humanities and social sciences plus business and economics to the award-winning refurbished Forestry Commission building for the 2026 academic year.

A change plan was signalled months ago by Vice-Chancellor Rufus Black and became inevitable with campaigning against the CBD move by Madeleine

Ogilvie, a Minister in the minority state government and a member for the electorate covering Sandy Bay. Ms Ogilvie welcomed the announcement, but recognised it will not happen without Federal funding. 'We intend to strongly advocate to the Commonwealth to invest in Tasmanian's STEM-led future,' she says.

And if Canberra does not come good, the State Government still wants the power to stop the university selling Sandy Bay. Ms Ogilvie says the Government will proceed with a bill requiring State Parliament approval for the sale of any existing campus land.

To which Opposition Leader Dean Winter, who has supported the city move, replies that she is, 'standing in the way of the UTAS from being able to fund their ambitious STEM plans, while also standing in the way of the development of thousands of houses in Hobart.' (Future Campus – 8 November)



**Free TAFE to be Locked In, Now About that JRG by Tim Winkler**. The Federal Government has introduced legislation to lock in 100,000 Fee-Free TAFE places each year from 2027.

FEE-Free TAFE has largely dropped off the radar of most of the Twitterati/LinkedIn chatterverse, because there seems to be fairly solid support for provision of free courses as a mechanism to drive individuals into areas of workforce need without encumbering them in debt – at least from the TAFEs hoovering up hundreds of thousands of enrolments.

#### *The Price is (sometimes) right*

Altering pricing to make courses more popular. Is that ringing any bells? Just this week someone posted a giant digital shrine of Gough Whitlam declaring university free of charge to all into one of my social feeds. The demise of free HE has been lamented multiple times per year since 1989 when HECS became part of the national policy furniture. When Gough introduced free uni in 1974, there were around 140,000 students and 18 universities. There are now around that many staff across more than 40 universities teaching 1.6 million students – in universities alone. Universal access to free degrees has a snowball's chance in



hell of even making it to Treasurer Jim Chalmers' suggestion box, but the Federal Government's tacit approval of the Job Ready Graduates pricing program for degrees (it's a failure but we have no timeline to change it) stands in stark contrast of its glowing endorsement of a price mechanism to drive enrolments in areas of government priority in the VET sector.

Standing by and watching tens of thousands of students rack up huge debts under JRG each year while gaily unlocking the treasure chest for TAFE students? It's not like low SES students only choose to enrol in TAFE. Policy coherence appears well over the horizon.

The press release announcing the legislation received little press, but provides ample insight into the Government's esteem for TAFE.

'My Government is putting TAFE back at the centre of vocational education and training, with our investment in Fee-Free TAFE having already seen over 500,000 Australians participating in priority areas to help fix skills shortages,' Prime Minister Albanese said.

'We want to make sure Australians can go on to have well-paid, secure jobs – and Fee-Free TAFE creates those opportunities for individuals as well as investing in the future of our country.'

*Voting with their feet?*

More than 508,000 students enrolled in fee-free TAFE between Jan 23 and June 24, proving it is popular – to start. Half a million beneficiaries, most of whom cast a vote, means Fee-free TAFE has a strong whiff of electoral success.

On the economic front, however, the more important stat is how many completed their course and went on to fill workforce gaps, which is where the Opposition are not happy, claiming that just 13% of Fee-Free students graduated in the first 15 months of the scheme – amounting to around 61,000 graduates.

Employers claim the low completion rates are not as bad as they seem, for example some tradies require just a few units of the free course, making press releases at five paces (or question time) probably not the best way to chart a strategic way forward.

*Retention*

Now paid places are on the verge of being locked in for TAFE's and universities face

tight domestic markets and international caps, retention is set to become a bigger operational focus than ever before – worth millions to the bottom line of stretched institutions.

This is all far too important to be left in the sole charge of underfunded and often voiceless student support teams and will become a common recurring meeting topic for leading executive teams in 2025 and beyond.

Sooner or later institutions will realise the very skills sitting in their marketing and engagement teams honed to engage and persuade prospective students to act need to be turned inwards to proactively engage students in more than happy snaps at weekly social events and drive systemic change in retention, working alongside curriculum and wellbeing experts, in a new strategic approach. (Future Campus – 8 November)



## BIG DATA, DATA ANALYTICS, BUSINESS INTELLIGENCE

**Just before caretaker kicked-in for the Queensland election** the Miles Government pitched to the very small, in every sense, quantum computing vote, with \$53m more for development. Half of it is for commercialisation infrastructure, which is admirably optimistic, what with their being no quantum computer to commercialise as yet. (Future Campus – 4 October)

**Urgent and Present Challenges with AI in Research by Stephen Matchett.** The National Health and Medical Research Council (NHMRC) convened a group of experts to advise on AI in health research and translation.

They responded that it is already happening and 'the challenges are present and urgent.'

The NHMRC [concisely reports](#) discussion results, where AI can help, including:

- image processing and interpretation for example, breast and skin cancer screening
- machine learning and AI to identify 'insights from genomics'

- evaluation of AI use health settings/applications
- diagnostic accuracy and personalised treatment and care in neurology

Issues in deploying AI:

- using it as a research tool, not the centrepiece
- need for 'robust' evaluation frameworks
- shortage of data scientists in health sector
- \*data standards and governance
- what research funders can do
- focus on outcomes rather than the technology
- support/incentives for multi-disciplinary teams, including project funding from the ARC, NHMRC and umbrella agency for the MRFF

The group also voiced some scepticism. 'Few participants said that while there have been advances in some areas, such as diagnostics and workforce logistics, these have not been seen at all in other parts of healthcare.' (Future Campus – 14 October)



**40% Cheat, 91% Worried About Being Caught for AI Use in Australian Unis by Tim Winkler.** More than four out of every five students admit to using AI for their studies, in new research which confirms the fears (and some dreams) of higher education leaders and regulators across the country.

The [AI in Higher Education: Student Perspectives study](#) found that 71% of Australian students who participated in the study believe that AI increases cheating.

Even more damning, perhaps reflecting the scramble to respond to the proliferation and evolution of generative AI platforms, 91% of students said they were worried about breaking uni rules in relation to AI. Just 40% admitted to using AI to cheat.



The results, presented last week by UQ's Acting PVC (Teaching and Learning Professor Kelly Matthews, UTS Professor Simon Buckingham Shum, provide fascinating insights from a new treasure-trove of data revealing the extent of student use of generative AI.

The pair are part of a new collective of 18 researchers from UQ, Deakin, Monash and UTS, who have coalesced this year to look at student attitudes to and use of AI, with the aim of helping the sector make strategic decisions to regulate and cultivate effective and ethical use of generative AI platforms as they evolve.

Just 27% of students trusted what AI generates, while 49% don't trust the output (and the remainder presumably are a bit bewildered like the rest of us).

The study also found that 56% of students are sceptical about AI – but the majority are also optimistic about its potential.

The study is the largest survey of Australian university students conducted on AI usage has found that 83% are using it for their studies, with 44% using generative AI platforms daily.

However, the majority feel that universities are letting them down in teaching how to use AI. Just 23% of students said that universities provided them with enough guidance to use AI effectively in their future profession and 32% said they had enough guidance to use AI effectively now in their studies.

The survey of more than 8,000 students from the four participating unis found that:

- 79% use AI to answer their questions
- 68% use AI to create written text they can use
- 51% use AI to analyse documents or data
- 38% use AI to create images or other visual media
- 34% use AI to create code or other technical outputs

The project promises a range of valuable insights into the use of AI and a much stronger evidence base to help inform policy and strategy development. (Future Campus – 28 October)



[Hackathons Key to Tackling AI in HE by Tim Winkler](#). Student and/or staff hackathons are critical tools to develop and test effective and ethical approaches to using AI platforms in higher education, according to researchers driving a new AI project.

UTS Professor Simon Buckingham Shum and UQ's Professor Kelly Matthews have been researching student perspectives on the use of generative AI in higher education with colleagues from UQ, Deakin, Monash and UTS. Professor Buckingham Shum told a conference last week that hackathons provided a valuable opportunity to develop and test new technological solutions.

Because the HE and AI landscapes were both turbulent, hackathons would provide an opportunity to press ahead with iterative prototyping and provide universities with the confidence to invest.

Inviting AI vendors to collaborate in hackathons and co-design solutions provided opportunities for universities to field teams to compete / participate in hackathon events, with substantial potential progress, as long as all code and ideas remain open source.

Underlying the importance of rapidly evolving new approaches to regulating and nurturing effective and ethical uses of AI, students said the current wild west approach to AI usage had changed the nature not just of study, but of being a student.

'I think it's changing the identity of being a student ... Sometimes, in the past, it required effort, repetition, hard-work, you know ... now it's become. I guess one word is efficient, but also like somebody else mentioned, lazier ... yes, being a student is not as great as it used to be,' Medicine student 'Mam' told the researchers.

The hackathon proposal is a key recommendation from the [AI in Higher Education: Student Perspectives](#) project, which involves 18 researchers drawn from across the four participating institutions.

The researchers, who only coalesced into a collective this year, have already conducted 20 focus groups with 79 students at their universities. If, like me, you wonder at the average of just under four students per focus group and hope with fingers crossed that the students were lulled into moments of lucid truth-

telling with promises of pizza, gift cards or anonymity; you will be glad to know that the results of these groups have been parlayed into a survey tool which is harvesting robust insights into AI use from more than 8,000 students.

This should be a marquee project for the sector. Four universities voluntarily collaborating to gather insights that regulators could only dream of dredging up, with practical take outs that pretty much all 140,000 staff in the sector (or 139,000 and declining after recent job cuts) will find relevant.

It is the largest survey of its kind in Australia, and assuming at least some of the students are prepared to fess up to at least some of their usage, the collaboration promises some significant and very timely insights. (Future Campus – 30 October)



## REPORTS AND RESOURCES

[More young people experiencing financial stress](#). The latest NCVER report shows 37% of 23-year-olds experienced financial stress in 2023, up from 30% in 2022 when they were 22 years of age. Generation Z: life at 23 uses results from the Longitudinal Surveys of Australian Youth (LSAY) to explore how young people fared when they were 23 years old in 2023. According to the data, more young people went without because of a shortage of money. In 2023, 19% of 23-year-olds skipped meals and 22% went without medical care, up from 15% and 17% respectively from when they were 22. The data also shows about one in ten 23-year-olds were not engaged in either study or work in 2023, many of whom had difficulties finding work or challenges related to their health. Among those not engaged in work or study, 58% were looking for work. (NCVER – 30 September)

[Unlocking Potential with Strategic Corporate and Community Collaborations](#). Chris Graham, Executive Vice President of Workforce and Community Education, National University. Corporate and community partnerships should serve both employers and students, providing students with professional mobility through flexible and personalized learning while offering





employers well-trained employees. (The EvoLLLution – 30 September)

**[Equity Policy Options: Parity Targets, Final Report](#)**. We are pleased to announce the release of our latest report, Equity Policy Options: Parity Targets, Final Report by the Australian Government Department of Education. This report contributes to ongoing efforts to ensure equitable outcomes for students from diverse equity groups as we prepare for the proposed expansion in higher education. The report examines the complex challenge of achieving equity student parity by 2035 or 2050. We outline several policy options for the Government, focusing on key considerations such as timing (2035 vs 2050), target contextualisation (national vs state), and approaches (convergence vs equal effort). Our modelling reveals the magnitude of this task, highlighting the need for refining equity group definitions, updating population reference rates, and making coordinated and intentional efforts across the entire higher education sector. I encourage you to read the full report to understand the detailed analysis and recommendations. We believe that by working together, we can make substantial progress towards achieving true equity in higher education. (ACSES – 1 October)



**[Redefining Student Affairs with Student and Community Engagement](#)** by Romando Nash, Vice Chancellor of Student Affairs, Washington State University. Students are looking to engage with their campus community and build a sense of belonging, and student affairs can be essential to meeting these needs. (The EvoLLLution – 7 October)

**[New apprentice and trainee quarterly data out now](#)**. The latest NCVER report shows that the number of apprenticeship and traineeship contracts in-training declined at the end of March 2024. The Apprentices and trainees 2024: March quarter report shows there were 351 695 apprenticeship and traineeship contracts in-training at the end of March 2024, a decrease of 34 570 (8.9%) when compared to the same time in 2023. In-training numbers for both trade and non-trade occupations decreased between the March 2023 and March 2024 quarters, and both decreased from the peak in June

2022. Although overall in-training numbers were down in the March 2024 quarter, they were 25.9% higher than pre-pandemic levels of March 2019. (NCVER – 9 October)

Latest Interactive Data Tool updates are now live. We are pleased to let you know that our [Interactive Data Tool](#) has now been updated with 2023 data.

Another recent update to the tool has resulted in it now also including data on students who are First in Family, and we have introduced aggregated groupings 'All Equity Students' and 'Non-Equity Students', which encompass the four major groupings of Low SES Students, First Nations Australian Students, Students from Remote and Regional Australia, and Students with Disability.

In other equity data related news, we have released two more Student Equity Data Guides. These are in addition to the two guides that were already available. All four guides are now available in the [Data Resources Hub](#) on our website:

- 'Higher Education Institutions in Australia'
- 'Defining Equity Groups'
- 'Equity Performance Measures'
- 'Selecting and Using Equity Reference Values'

We hope that these guides can help demystify equity data and provide clarity and practical guidance for stakeholders across the sector. If there are any other equity data related topics that you would like clarification or detail on, please feel free to [contact me](#) directly. (ACSES – 15 October)



**[Embracing Continuing Education as a Catalyst for University Growth and Innovation by Rick Russo | Dean of Extension, University of California, Berkeley](#)**. Continuing education's move to the forefront isn't a coincidence. It can act as a bridge to programs and degrees for students, provide a direct connection to industry and boost enrollment and retention rates for the institution. (The EvoLLLution – 21 October)

**[VET qualification completion rates 2023 out now](#)**. The latest NCVER report shows that overall, completion rates for qualifications that commenced in 2019

was 47.3%, similar to the rate for those that commenced in 2018, when measured four years after commencement. Despite disruptions caused by the COVID-19 pandemic, including impacts to work placements, training delivery and student engagement, completion rates for qualifications that commenced in 2019 are higher than those that began between 2015 and 2017, when measured four years after commencement. (NCVER – 24 October)

**[Collaboration Beyond Transactions: Building Meaningful Higher Education-Employer Partnerships](#)** in Maine & Dan Belyea, Chief Workforce Development Officer, Maine Community College System and Harold Alford Center for the Advancement of Maine's Workforce. With higher education facing unprecedented challenges, ensuring institutions fulfill their mission requires collaborative partnerships and shared resources to help students gain the skills they need, however and wherever they prefer. (The EvoLLLution – 28 October)

**[A Vision for Continuous Innovation in Higher Ed](#)** by Aria Chernik, Assistant Vice Provost for Faculty Development and Applied Research in Learning Innovation at Duke Learning Innovation and Lifetime Education, Duke University. The focus on learner-centered education, cross-sector collaboration, and humane technology is driving institutions to innovate and ensure relevance in the 21st century educational environment. (The EvoLLLution – 28 October)

**[Leading Through Change with IT Strategy for the New Student Demographic](#)** by Lois Brooks, Vice Provost and CIO, University of Wisconsin—Madison. As higher education undergoes transformative shifts, IT leaders are increasingly called to serve as both strategists and stewards of innovation. Their presence at the decision-making table is essential to guide institutions through the complexities of technology, fostering greater adaptability and inclusivity along the way. (The EvoLLLution – 2 November)





INSTITUTIONAL RESEARCH CONFERENCES & EVENTS

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## 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

### 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.

### 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](#).

## POSITIONS VACANT



Find a Job

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

Advertise a Job

## ON THE MOVE

### Courtesy of Future Campus

Emma Johnston has won the keys to the Vice-Chancellor's Office at the University of Melbourne, and will take over the helm from Duncan Maskell in February 2025. Professor Johnston is currently DVC(R) at the University of Sydney.

Adelaide Uni (no, not UoA yes, AU, the new one) announces the DVC management team. Joanne Cys (now Uni SA) is Provost. Paul Beard (UniSA): corporate, Jessica Gallagher (UoA): international/external, Steve Larkin (UoA): Indigenous, Anton Middleberg (UoA): research, Tom Steer (UniSA):

students, Paula Ward (UoA): staff, John Williams (UoA): academic.

Nicole Gower starts work as VP Operations at Uni Sydney. She moved from VP Professional Services at Macquarie U.

Fiona Bygraves has been appointed Chief of Staff for the CFO at Monash, moving from the University's Law Faculty.

Cath Ellis will join Western Sydney University next month as Pro Vice-Chancellor, Quality & Integrity after a brief stint as a consultant.

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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](mailto: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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