SUBMISSION

July 2008

ACCI SUBMISSION TO THE HIGHER EDUCATION REVIEW

Introduction

1. The Australian Chamber of Commerce and Industry (ACCI) is Australia's largest and most representative business organisation. ACCI represents the interests of approximately 350 000 employers across the country and in a wide range of industry sectors. ACCI presents a robust and independent voice in the national skills arena that stems from the depth and breadth of ACCI's membership base.

2. A copy of ACCI's Education and Training Policy Objectives are **ATTACHED.**

3. ACCI welcomes the opportunity to respond to the Higher Education review discussion paper. ACCI recognises the value that higher education brings to the nation's economy through building a highly skilled and technically competent workforce and ensuring the sustainable supply of skilled labour to Australian industry.

4. Higher education has an important but not exclusive role to play in economic development. Unless the higher education sector responds to the needs of its customers and improves its performance, the economic and social benefits that flow from a highly skilled and adaptable workforce will not be fully realised. Adaptability, flexibility and creativity are the keys to being innovative and hence to being competitive in a challenging and uncertain environment, and they require the capacity for businesses to substantially change traditional patterns of production and work, skill uses and organisational systems.

5. This Review must focus on higher education's contribution to post-compulsory education and Australia's economic and social development. It is imperative that the Review takes full account of business and community expectations of the higher education sector and is not overwhelmed by views of the institutions themselves.

Vision

6. From the point of view of the business community, ACCI recommends an integrated post secondary skills environment where skills and knowledge delivered are current and up-to-date, where the standards of the skills and knowledge acquired are deemed by industry to be excellent, and where articulation between institutions is easy and based on sound recognition principles.

7. There is currently little incentive for universities to adopt forward looking practices, to reform existing rigid administrative arrangements and staffing structures, to pursue opportunities for domestic growth and to respond quickly to the changing needs of students and industry.

8. Industry and community expectations are increasing because of:

- Australia needs to become a higher-skill, more knowledge-intensive producer in response to global pressures if it is to raise or even maintain its living standards;
- technological change, particularly information and communications technologies, increases the relative demand for skill; and
- the shift toward services in economic activity changes the demand for certain types of skills, with a focus on conceptual and interpersonal skills.

9. Employers expect better outcomes and continually look for products tailored to their needs. Knowledge based industries are growing which is placing more importance on higher education. Just like all service industries predominantly funded by government, there is enormous pressure to improve cost effectiveness and desired performance levels.

10. Increased demand is coming from demographic pressures as well as pressure from employers and

industry for skilled workers as opposed to unskilled workers. Increasingly, students and employers are requiring a mix of vocational and academic skills development options.

11. Factors affecting the level of demand include the fact that competition is increasing among higher education and other providers. Potential competitors now come from outside the established network and from other education sectors.

12. As well Information Technology is revolutionising education products, changing the way teaching is delivered and the way administrative processes are managed. Given these changes, it is imperative that there be a fundamental repositioning of the higher education sector, which takes account of a number of key elements, in particular:

- **a demand driven system** – this more closely aligns education and training to the needs of business, students and governments and shifts the focus to a business culture where incentives are created for maximising volume and quality, reducing costs and using resources more effectively;
- **a competitive and diverse market** – competition and diversity will lead to a more efficient and cost effective system while increasing the range of options available. This will require a higher level of flexibility to enable better use of capital assets and to address issues such as economies of scale and third party access;
- **deregulating the system** – ensuring quality outcomes and appropriate quality servicing arrangements across Australia minimises Government intervention and relaxes many of the current points of regulation. This allows more effective, responsive delivery of services. At the same time a framework must be maintained that incorporates accountability, quality and accreditation.
- **universal access** – the system must promote the concept of a universal entitlement to post secondary education for all eligible Australian students (school leavers and mature age students) together with programs which have equity considerations based on ability rather than income;
- **student centred funding** – students should be able to purchase a course from any public or private provider (User Choice). Funding should be linked to student outcomes/achievements with prices determined by market forces. It is recognised that some transitional arrangements will be required to implement this arrangement;
- **simplified articulation pathways** – this requires closer cooperation between the sectors on credit transfers and recognition of prior learning and articulation streams. In this context, the Australian Quality Framework (AQF) should be accepted as a standard continuum and credentials aligned with AQF levels; and
- **quality research and development** – closely linked to economic needs and close business collaboration.

13. The vision for higher education in Australia should take account of developments in other education and training sectors rather than perpetuating points of differentiation and separation. The central goal of any reform should be the development of an integrated post-compulsory system which is driven by its primary customers (that is individuals and business) with the full spectrum of providers being supported by an incentives regime to deliver appropriate services of excellence in education, training and research.

Higher Education and the COAG Agenda

14. ACCI believes that higher education in Australia needs to be part of the broader COAG productivity agenda. Higher education plays a significant role in developing the cognitive and technical skills needed in the Australian economy and the incorporation of the higher education sector into the COAG Productivity Agenda would enable a more streamlined approach to addressing skills shortages in critical industries.

15. There would also be considerable benefit from the reduction of duplication and the streamlining of funding across the post secondary sectors. ACCI believes that there is a need to examine the total level of resources flowing into the post compulsory sector in a more holistic manner. The current post secondary environment sees considerable flow of students between the sectors. Including the higher education sector in the COAG Productivity Agenda would serve to strengthen links within the post compulsory sector and develop stronger pathways that allow transitions between universities and the VET sector.

16. Inclusion on the COAG agenda will provide a more holistic understanding of all skills that contribute to productivity growth, not just vocational skills.

Links with the Business Community

17. There is a strong need to foster stronger links between the university sector and the business community. ACCI acknowledges that universities play a strong role in the fostering of a broader education and the development of strong cognitive and meta-cognitive processes for students. ACCI sees that there is great value in having a highly skilled professional workforce with well developed problem solving skills and a broader application of knowledge.

18. Current models of university governance and curriculum development processes are not conducive to industry input. Industry finds it difficult to enter into a strategic dialogue about current and future skill needs within the economy, because there is no formal mechanism for them to engage with the university sector as a whole. The UK Lambert Review of Business-University Collaboration[1] recognises that lack of sector wide engagement between universities and industry as a major barrier towards affecting demand driven change in the higher education sector.

19. Businesses that have links with universities for course development do so on an individual basis, and although these links are often effective, they are limited to larger companies and cover particular business needs.

20. There needs to be more formal structures in place to ensure that students are able to build industry relevant skills. This should include access to structured places in industry, including international exposure, as part of the learning undertaken in a course of studies. There should be further investigation of course design processes to enable these relationships to be established, nurtured or expanded depending on the current level of involvement.

Skills Planning

21. The *SAI Global - ACCI Survey of Investor Confidence* shows that there is a significant concern amongst business about the availability of suitably qualified employees[2] Education reform is central to addressing this concern.

22. Education by itself does not directly raise living standards. Gains come through the application of skills and knowledge learned. Therefore it is important that reforms to the supply of education are combined with reforms aimed at improving the integration of education into the workforce.

23. Australia's ability to design and deliver an estimated $400 billion in infrastructure projects over the coming decade could be under threat because engineering firms across Australia are delaying and even declining projects outright due to a lack of available staff. These skill shortages are based on existing technology and current shortages do not account for changing technology and emerging needs.

24. There is a strong need to coordinate skills planning agencies across secondary, VET and higher education sectors, especially in relation to maths and science. Every consideration should be made of the impact that all agencies have one upon each other in identifying skills needs and devising education and training plans to meet those needs.

25. There is currently no governance structure at the national or state level to enable strong interaction between the business community and the university sector in a formal way. While advisory structures such as Business / Higher Education Round Table (BHERT) and Business, Industry and Higher Education Collaboration Council (BIHECC) exist a more formal governance structure that involves business and industry representative organisations is required. This would provide leadership to the university sector and guidance around the types and levels of engagement that are mutually beneficial to students and businesses alike.

Regionalisation

26. There is some support from institutions to receive a regional supplementation for funding regional activity. There are obvious difficulties in defining what regions are when linked to funding allocations. Incentives could be provided to institutions to specialise rather than compete in all areas.

27. Some institutions argue that they must meet community service obligations and therefore require special funding in order to service the community. This is obviously difficult to measure. However, TAFE institutes are also strongly arguing the provision of this service is a key element of their activity as well. It is clear that accounting for what this is, and the resources required, is difficult to quantify.

28. It is better to provide incentives to offer specific courses, particularly as they relate to labour market needs, rather than developing intricate planning processes for course provision. This would often require substantial government intervention with elaborately developed, but highly inflexible, funding agreements between government and providers. The extent of course rationalisation needs to be balanced against informed student centred funding. However, offerings requiring substantial infrastructure must be limited if we are not to spread our resources too thinly.

29. The extent of collaboration between all post-compulsory providers (Year 11 and 12 schools, VET providers and higher education institutions) provides the opportunity for achieving significant cost efficiencies. In some instances despite the limitations of physical location there is still the potential for a limited sharing of delivery of enhanced articulation.

1 HM Treasury, Lambert Review of Business-University Collaboration (2003).

2 The survey is published quarterly and the July 2008 survey showed that the *Availability of Suitably Qualified Employees* was ranked first while the *Availability of Training Facilities*. The survey is available at http://www.acci.asn.au/SurveySOIC.htm.

Student Centred Funding Model

30. Broader discussions around resourcing higher education need to take place for four reasons.

- There is considerable movement between the sectors by students and an increasing expectation to have access to that mobility.
- There is a need to examine the total level of resources flowing into the post compulsory sector in a holistic manner.
- Substantial efficiencies could be achieved through the rationalisation of course offerings and infrastructure.
- Flexibility in the post compulsory sector will be required for lifelong learning options.

31. Serious consideration should be given to the introduction of a student centred funding arrangements. The Industry Commission, the predecessor to the Productivity Commission, was established in 1990 as the major public independent review and advisory body on industry policy for Australian governments. It found that:

- students would have a more direct influence over the course offerings of institutions; and
- public institutions would face stronger competitive pressures and be directly rewarded for responding effectively to student preferences. This could produce gains in various areas, notably:
  - a greater variety of course offerings in terms of price/quality combinations;
  - increased stimulus to improve efficiency;
  - enhanced capacity to strike a better balance between revenues and costs in providing different course combinations; and
  - stronger stimulus and rewards to innovation.

32. The various ways to introduce a scheme with these features is examined below.

Performance based funding – Portable Scholarships

33. Public funding for tuition should be tied to student choice. This requires a direct relationship between the providers and the students to determine the flow of public funds to institutions. It also puts the onus on the student to make the right choice. There are some that argue that students would make poor choices. However, in other areas of their life, students are legally entitled to make choices about voting, finance, employment, marriage and a range of other critical matters in their lives at the age of 18. If it is believed that students are competent enough to elect Federal and State governments then they should be competent to make rational decisions about education. Provided that they have access to the right information to support their choice, they should also have the responsibility to exercise control over their higher education choices

34. The introduction of student centred funding should be the cornerstone of further reforms to higher education. Essentially it allows for a basic financial entitlement for all to be used in post compulsory education and training activity. Core funding should be replaced by portable Australian Government funded vouchers. Student vouchers would work to replace current core funding arrangements by endowing students with a direct subsidy to use at any of Australia's public universities. This subsidy would be collected by the University upon enrolment or transfer of the student.

35. To encourage students into critical areas of skills shortages the student-centred funding model would include weightings that recognise current and future skills needs, and similarly for socio-economic status (SES) and other nationally agreed priorities.

36. There is some potential for means testing the entitlement, but this would meet with considerable resistance and would add considerable complexity. Any introduction should take account of:

- the need to couple this arrangement with a deregulation of fees;
- minimal targeted incentives aimed at distorting university choices;
- appropriate careers advice in schools and for mature adults to ensure potential students can make more informed choices including information on employment outcomes for areas of study;
- minimal interference or bureaucratic assessments of special payments for areas of skill shortages. This would instead be covered by improved employment, careers advice and industry participation;
- investigation of the interaction between student centred funding and other forms of revenue including research and development and private sources; and
- appropriate Living Away from Home Allowances which allow students to receive some subsidy for moving to institutions of their choice.

37. Initially these changes should be phased in with 50 percent of core funding allocated to students with the remainder made up by 50 percent of a university's current core operating grant. This ratio of direct funding to core grants would be increased over a number of years until core grants had been phased out. In addition the number of students given vouchers would be adjusted

based on experience with the number of vouchers and final attendance figures at universities.

38. Criticisms of this approach are that:

- students may not make appropriate choices;
- low demand and high cost courses requiring cross-subsidisation will no longer be offered;
- a perceived difficulty in planning;
- reduced teacher and research quality; and
- threats to the viability of some institutions.

39. These are valid concerns and care must be taken to avoid these outcomes.

40. *Student Choices:* In particular students are entrusted with a significant range of decisions in any event and given that relevant and appropriate information is available, should be capable of making an informed choice.

41. *Cross Subsidisation:* Course rationalisation is already a feature of the present system and courses subject to low demand and high costs are already often restructured or discontinued. Under demand driven systems some scope should continue to exist for direct subsidisation of courses considered to have large spill-overs that are not being factored into market decisions. For example philosophy and archaeology might be candidates for an extra subsidy. Any subsidisation undertaken this way would be transparent and allow for greater scrutiny of taxpayer funding.

42. *Planning Difficulties:* Market participants in the private sector manage extraordinarily complex and diverse supply and demand considerations and this management process ultimately determines whether that provider succeeds or fails in the market. Universities also currently manage very complex affairs and do not currently have guarantees over student numbers and a transition period to a more competitive environment should ensure that universities can adjust their internal processes.

43. *Teacher and Research Quality:* A central feature of demand driven systems is that they ultimately lead to greater quality and output since the incentives lie with improving quality staffing and education to attract revenue. Where competition is weak the priority is not on quality but on the quantity of student numbers.

44. *Viability:* It is an unfortunate part of the proposed system that some institutions may struggle due to lack of demand for their offerings. Should a regional need be identified as having greater community benefits than is being realised privately a case can be made for subsidisation. This subsidisation would then be entirely transparent and allow policy priorities to be more targeted, responsive and accountable.

45. Promoting efficiency must be done from two separate directions if the sector's performance is to rise. Consideration could be given to reductions in the level of regulation of some course fees, while at the same time competition needs to be fostered. Lifting caps on fees without correspondingly promoting competition runs the risk of having fees rise by the same amount. Without competition freeing up some fee caps and floors will not improve outcomes. Only through a well structured framework for competition will educational outcomes improve and competition will struggle so long as income streams are inflexible.

- Reforms should include continued attention to the level of regulation of fees, courses and the number of places universities can offer. The approach to meet the objectives of students, education institutes and industry should focus on enhancing demand driven outcomes.
- In appropriate circumstances, market-based solutions including issuing students with vouchers to replace relatively inflexible funding arrangements should be implemented. Substantial efficiencies could be achieved through the rationalisation of course offerings and infrastructure.

Corporate Governance and Management of Universities

46. Mechanisms should be established to encourage universities to become more flexible and responsive to the needs of individuals and business, foster autonomy of each institution and ensure accountability and quality.

47. Issues requiring attention on the discussions on governance should include:

- the variation between State and Territory legislation on the requirements of senates and governing councils and the possible need to develop a national uniform standard which holds governing bodies responsible for their actions. It is imperative that Commonwealth and State/Territory reporting and monitoring process are harmonised;
- Senates or Councils operating as governing bodies rather than advisory forums where members are not held accountable. Many institutions have alternative forums allowing opportunities for community input which are separate and occur prior to Senate considerations;
- development of a clear statement of purpose of governing bodies which are then reflected in appropriate statements of roles and responsibilities. Some institutions have objects which are often very broad and lack clarity of purpose;

- the academic component of the university should not be seen as separate in terms of governance. A whole of university approach is needed for academia;
- the composition of relevant bodies is often too broad. In some cases, it is evident that individuals are involved as representatives of groups rather than due to their own expertise. In addition, it should be clear to any member that decisions made must be in the interests of the body corporate rather than other organisations. In addition, deliberations at Council need to be private and not used for public debate at a later time; and
- any established structure must be used to enhance the accountability of the Vice Chancellor and executive. The impact of this on operations is much more evident through an active Council rather than an external government body. It also provides an opportunity for genuine feedback.

Transitions into Higher Education

48. Many students entering higher education from secondary school for the first time have gaps in their education. Many universities have cited incidents where remedial classes in language and literacy, academic writing and mathematics have become commonplace for first year students. This is often exacerbated by differences in curricula between states and territories.

49. Of particular concern have been reports that students entering science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM) fields of study not having basic or sufficient mathematical ability to cope with the course material.

50. There is not a simple solution to this problem as there are many complex factors that contribute towards this situation and conversely, many secondary school graduates have other highly developed skills in previously unimportant areas such as creativity, IT skills and confidence. What is needed is better connectivity between higher education institutions, businesses and schools so that students have a comprehensive understanding of the importance of Language Literacy and Numeracy (LLN) and STEM and are provided with the opportunity to redress any gaps in these areas. This is in keeping with a lifelong learning approach but needs to be more actively pursued by all relevant stakeholders.

Lifelong learning

51. Lifelong learning broadly describes an approach to learning that covers "cradle to grave" and recognises that all types of learning all contribute towards a person's skills. Lifelong learning is ongoing and does not cease once a person exits a learning institution.

52. The majority of the current generation of students and people in the workforce will at some stage of their working career need to refresh their knowledge and upgrade their skills in order to maintain their competitiveness in the workforce.

53. The higher education sector, including universities and VET providers will need to ensure the flexibility of study options and the ease of transitions between work and academic study to allow individuals to engage in learning on an as needs basis. This will mean institutes will need to offer a range of flexible study options including e-learning, self paced options and access to other study options that fit around the working life of the individual.

Vocational Education and Training (VET) and Higher Education

54. Issues in relation to the interface between higher education and VET:

- There appears to be a degree of academic elitism by higher education to VET provision. The inherent tension between competency based learning and curriculum remains a major issue.
- Articulation between VET and higher education is a constant problem, particularly as many of these decisions are made at the institutional level.
- What has become clearer is the increase in university graduates taking a VET course.

55. Any thorough examination of resourcing, particularly future projections, must take account of projected VET participation and relevant government resourcing.

- *Free movement between the sectors* – differences between the sectors should not restrict the capacity of individuals to move between them. Higher education institutions are progressively delivering programs that are similar to those offered in the VET sector. Many more students are now moving from higher education into the VET sector. In addition, due to the increasing pressure from the growth of VET in Schools, the school sector will emerge as a key bridge between the VET and higher education sectors.
- *Cooperative ventures* – this may include parts of higher education programs delivered by VET institutions and vice versa.
- *Education consortia* – there are opportunities for the two sectors to deliver collaboratively a range of commercial consultancy, education and training services to industries and enterprises.
- *Pathways* – are gradually opening up and now include provision for double or joint qualifications.

56. Funding models can assist in articulation between the sectors. They need to be equitable and provide students with access to income contingent loans would assist articulation across the sectors and provide clarity around the value of qualifications provided within and across institutions.

57. Revised qualification descriptors are also necessary to enhance articulation. Reform in this area should be a national work priority for governments.

58. Rather than each university determining its own articulation requirements, a national system should be devised that includes Recognition of Prior Learning to facilitate easy movement between the sectors.

Quality of Teaching and Learning

59. The points in influencing the quality of teaching and learning include:

- better undergraduate courses for teachers which include an element of understanding the world of work;
- ongoing access to professional development;
- outcome measures which include retention, employment and utilisation of research work;
- audit of providers against agreed standards. This practice is used in the VET system against a nationally recognised framework with appropriate audit materials;
- establishment of appropriate financial incentives for individual teachers. This requires more flexible workplace relations responses and enterprise agreements;
- student and employer satisfaction and destination surveys;
- a revised graduate skills assessment survey which will closely align with the ACCI/BCA Employability Skills Framework.

60. If sufficient numbers of qualified teachers are not graduating from teacher education programs, then other potential pathways to teacher certifications need to be investigated, including accessing employees in business or research.

Better Links between Academia and the Business Community

61. In the past there has been a perception that the higher education system has diverged from the expectations of industry. Equally, there is now recognition that industry must play its part and that the level of interaction needs to be increased.

62. There is now a progressive broadening of industry involvement. This includes widening representation on management or advisory committees for departments or faculties in the preparation of course frameworks, creating opportunities for formal industry contracts with lecturers and tutors and encouraging opportunities for lecturers and tutors to work within enterprises.

63. ACCI advocates links between faculties and business and industry groups to provide access to better planning of student placements and opportunities for academic staff to refresh their understanding of modern business and industry practices and trends.

Specialist Areas

64. *Language, Literacy and Numeracy* - From a business perspective the LLN skills developed and acquired as part of a qualification must be able to be used in the context where they will be applied whether that is in an Australian or in an international environment.

65. Employers must have confidence that a qualification means what it says including implied standards of LLN. Too often employers bear the costs of providing additional training and assistance to employees who do not meet basic LLN workplace standards. No matter how bright a graduate may be, there is a risk of debasing the value of a qualification if students can obtain a qualification without meeting basic LLN standards.

66. *Science Technology Engineering and Mathematics* - STEM plays a critical role underpinning many professional and technological occupations within the Australian workforce. Currently in Australia, there is a well documented and growing shortage of engineers and mathematics teachers. Government agencies, such as CSIRO and the Bureau of Statistics, are also reporting difficulties in recruiting personnel with appropriate training in the STEM fields. This trend mirrors workforce pressures felt across a number of industries as the population ages.

67. Australia performs above the OECD average in maths and science test scores which augers well for the future quality of Australia's innovative and R&D future. Nonetheless, the supply of maths graduates from universities is particularly low when compared to historical trends. This is mirrored in the skills of maths teachers at the secondary school level. This is a major policy issue.

68. The supply of science graduates from universities has performed better, boosted by migration. However, demand is high. There are particular shortages in engineering for example. Also, of major concern is the shortage of high school science teachers in areas such as physics.

69. Universities face a continuing decline in students enrolling in science subjects such as maths, physics, and chemistry; and there was a similar worldwide trend

in high schools with students opting out of science subjects such as hard maths.

70. Demand is increasing from a range of industries and in order to remain competitive and become world leaders this demand must be met. Australia can always meet a proportion of its demand for skills from international sources. However, all OECD countries are in a competitive bidding race for international talent. In the longer term Australia must provide as high a proportion as possible of maths and science graduates through our domestic education system.

71. Teachers delivering maths and science classes could be more qualified with further education, through the introduction of a flexible wages structure in order to compete with other industries vying for the same skills

72. ACCI proposes that while consideration can be given to reducing HECS and FEE-HELP obligations for those studying maths and science it is not the most effective mechanism for improving teacher training

Employability Skills

73. The UK Lambert Report: Lambert Review of Business-University Collaboration (2003) contained a recommendation that "Funding Councils should require universities to publish information in their prospectuses on graduate and postgraduate employability for each department (or faculty, if datasets are too small) by 2006. This information should include employability statistics …" ACCI supports this recommendation.

74. A report to the former Minster for Education made by BIHECC last year made several recommendations in relation to employability skills. Not all of the recommendations made were supported by the ACCI network of organisations. ACCI did not support the establishment of an employability skills strategy fund, nor did it support the approach that work integrated learning is the only way to obtain and develop employability skills.

75. While employability skills can be acquired via work integrated learning, the approach suggested in the report does not reflect a cogent understanding of the metacognitive nature of the employability skills framework.

76. The employability skills framework which contains skills such as skills of problem solving, critical thinking and creativity, analysis of the impact of actions, and communication and teamwork are essential when combined in building the skills required for innovation.

77. ACCI supports the integration of employability skills into university curricula and a better alignment with the Graduate Skills Assessment (GSA). An improved GSA and better promotion to employers would provide a more effective construct for the implementation of employability skills in the higher education sector.

Work Integrated Learning

78. There are a variety of formats that Work-integrated Learning takes across the higher education sector and this provides a rich learning environment for students. There is potential for expanding Work-integrated Learning and other forms of experience-based learning across Australian universities.

79. Work-integrated Learning is a powerful model of learning, which provides a wider range of experiences, including those not necessarily constructed by academics. This includes the work experience students already have when they enter university and the fact that most students engage in part-time work to support themselves while studying. Further investigation needs to be made about working for earning as well as working for learning, the value each contributes towards the development of employability skills and what contribution a structured working experience can make towards a course of studies.

80. From a business perspective, encouraging partnerships with the business community will extend the resources available for learning in the higher education sector. . Further, it will provide benefits to business through outcomes based on "quality constructed learning experiences for students".

81. There is a need to look to the future through different ways of learning, different forms of knowledge and different ways of teaching. This will foster innovation and achieve improved standards of excellence in the higher education arena.

82. Work-integrated Learning must be supported by mechanisms for giving experiences value such as assessment and accreditation as students tend generally to value what is assessed and accredited. This might be addressed as part of the degree itself, or through an additional award.

83. Connected to this is the need for graduate attributes (and their employability skills subsets) to be reflected in more intentional design of constructed learning experiences, within a frame which recognises and values a broader range of learning experiences, rather than assuming that their development will be the accidental outcome of conventional teaching processes.

Achieving Equitable and Appropriate Outcomes: Indigenous Australians in Higher Education

84. ACCI policy supports initiatives which promote a quality of education opportunity with options for

groups with special needs. Therefore, it is recognised that supplementary funding should be provided to assist institutions in meeting the needs of those most disadvantaged in the labour market. This includes provision of adequate provision of support services, graduate employment programs, introduction of cadetships, and establishment of appropriate mentoring services to increase completions.

85. In the case of Indigenous students, substantial money is provided to institutions to service students but success in relation to outcomes is unclear. Indigenous student support services have varying degree of success and the connection to employers is not always strong. Opportunities for Indigenous graduates for cadetships for Australian Apprenticeships should be encouraged

86. It may be necessary in some instances to conduct pre-undergraduate courses to enhance equity group participation. Often other non-educational factors impact on participation including childcare, travel difficulties and isolation from family.

ATTACHMENT

ACCI Education and Training Policy Objectives

ACCI supports education and training policies which:

- improve education and training as a driven system that is specifically aligned to industry needs;
- support the allocation of government funding to education and training outcomes that provide incentives for employers to participate, maximise opportunities for participants and enhance efficiencies within the system;
- expand the role of competitive markets in all sectors by pursuing open competition principles that diversify the supply of education;
- create competitive conditions that enhance the 'user choice' principle;
- promote student centred funding that allows an individual to purchase a course of study through the school, vocational education and training provider or university of their choice;
- promote the options available in clear, unambiguous, non-jargon ways that will be easily understood by students, employers and the current workforce;
- facilitate the usage and availability of multiple education and training pathways from school to the workplace;
- align packaging of training standards leading to a national qualification under the Australian Qualifications Framework (AQF);
- focus on nationally consistent outcomes and achieve standards that are comparable to international standards of best practice;
- respond to the growing need for students to undertake workplace learning programs that develop links with industry and create pathways to further training and employment;
- improve, and regularly test, on a nationally agreed and consistent basis, literacy and numeracy standards;
- strengthen the focus on sound such as literacy and numeracy, at primary and early secondary school levels;
- acknowledge, develop and assess in a contextual manner, employability skills;
- improve and integrate careers education, employability skills and enterprise education principles into the education and training system;
- encourage the adoption of an enterprising culture, particularly by young Australians;
- support articulation arrangements across the school, vocational education and training and higher education sectors;
- promote equality of education opportunities and options for groups with special needs who experience barriers to participation in education, training and work;
- enhance opportunities for education providers to be trained and qualified to standards which are adequately benchmarked; and
- promote training reform which is enterprise focused, demand driven, flexible, mindful of all parties involved and devoid of extensive bureaucracy.