

**Response to the Greens' Discussion Paper
'The University of the Future'**

Academics for Public Universities

Summary

- University Chancellors and Vice-Chancellors must be selected from among the most distinguished academics, should be elected for fixed terms, and paid double the professorial award salary.
- Effective governance of universities should be by their academic and support staff and student communities, who should constitute an effective majority on all decision-making bodies.
- Commercial corporate management of our universities is directly responsible for all of the crises in our universities, and its power and privilege and mechanisms must be removed; otherwise, effective reform is not possible.
- We support holistic reform of the entire university system, modelled upon European systems in which academics and students exercise decisive decision-making powers over all matters pertaining to teaching and research, and which are fully funded by government.
- There needs to be bipartisan continuing commitment to the full funding of universities, and regulation of how funding is allocated by management.
- We support clear definitions of the parameters of freedom of speech and protest, and mandatory compliance by university managements. This includes an end to staff surveillance and control in all forms, and of police intervention on campuses.
- The underlying ideology of the 'enterprise' or corporatized university must be challenged, and an alternative understanding of the 'public university' and of the humanistic and civil purpose of education asserted.
- Academics should be at liberty to pursue any research they wish, and better funded to do so. Research outcomes should be sufficiently developed and invested in by government and the business community in Australia. All business involvement in universities should be subject to academic oversight, and commissioned research should be subject to ethical standards.

- Casualization should be eliminated, or at least significantly reduced, academic workloads should be able to be completed within contracted hours, all work should be fully remunerated, university management should be responsible for maintaining high standards of health and safety in their working environments, and all university employees should have reasonable job security.
- We oppose any discrimination on grounds of ethnicity, gender, age, or other circumstances.
- We agree that better support services (including academic), funding, affordable and safe accommodation, and equitable access and opportunity for all students are needed.
- The question of quality and standards for all degree programmes needs to be reviewed, all universities should be required to ensure a base-line of content for all professional qualifying degrees to be successfully completed by students, and unacceptably high teacher-student ratios must be reduced.
- A range of issues raised in this discussion paper require further clarification and consultation.

Should vice-chancellors and deans be elected by staff and students?

Vice-chancellors should be working career academics from the universities they are elected to be VCs of, and not head-hunted from outside of those institutions. They should be elected for a fixed term of e.g. five years, with an option of one re-election only. They should be elected by the academic and support staff and student bodies of their universities.

Executive deans are currently a managerial office that should be abolished. Academic heads of departments should be elected by their colleagues, or hold office in rotation. Departmental elected student representatives could also vote in such elections.

The proliferation of PVCs/DVCs needs to be reviewed. All such salaries should be according to an academic salary scale and appropriate to seniority.

How much do you think vice-chancellors should be paid?

Vice-chancellors should be paid double the academic salary for a senior professor, and provided with such other funding as is necessary to perform their duties.

If Australian VCs are currently the most highly paid in the world, and if the business ‘logic’ of this is that it attracts the best ‘talent’, then one would expect every Australian university to be better than Oxbridge and ‘Ivy League’ universities. In reality, not one of them is.

Should there be a minimum proportion of members of university councils from the university community that are democratically elected by staff and students? If so, what should this percentage be?

Universities exist for teaching and research and to serve the community. They should be governed by academics, with student, support staff and union representation, and these should constitute the effective decision-making majority on boards, councils and senates, and other committees.

There should also be representatives from all areas of society who are able to make a constructive contribution to academic decision making, but they should not constitute a majority. These may be external appointees, but should be approved by the university community board members. Members of the business community should sit only when they are likewise able to make a positive contribution to the teaching and research role of universities and their involvement with the community, but should not constitute a majority or be disproportionately represented in relation to other community representatives. The current process of appointments has been corrupted and stands in need of reform; it cannot continue to operate in the current manner.

University management does require administrators, but these should not have unaccountable unilateral control over finances or budgetary allocations, nor any influence on decision making pertaining to academic matters. All aspects of the business model of current university governance are primarily responsible for the crises in our universities, and need to be removed. That ideology includes a lack of trust of academics, the commodification of knowledge, education as consumption, and the belief that management is the guardian of a ‘brand’ that it may do anything to protect.

We support the proposal that the minutes of all managerial, board and committee meetings and decisions should be readily accessible, and that no decision-making body should conduct meetings at which minutes are not recorded.

How do we ensure our universities are transparent spaces founded on trust and respect?

Management pursues a policy of tacit lack of trust and respect towards its employees and towards students. An overt shift in attitudes from management would be necessary to change the campus atmosphere, to eliminate the toxicity and to replace it with an open, more genuinely equitable, and positive environment.

Universities can implement measures to make campuses safer, particularly for women and for discriminated-against minority groups. In 2017, the Australian Human Rights Commission released *Change the Course: National Report on Sexual Assault and Sexual Harassment at Australian Universities*, which explored students' experiences of sexual harassment and assault. This report gave rise to much-needed nationwide campaigns, such as the university sector's *Respect. Now. Always.* campaign to prevent and address sexual assault and sexual harassment. While this is wonderful, it is not sufficient by itself to ensure safety for staff and students. Robust support services, which are frequently the targets of budget cuts, are needed, as are clear reporting procedures. There must also be increased awareness of the power imbalances between staff and students, or senior staff and junior staff, which can sometimes open opportunities for predatory behaviour that is not always recognised as such by perpetrators.

For universities to be transparent spaces that are founded on trust and respect, they must also be safe spaces for diversity. In practice, this means ensuring equity for students and staff from marginalised and/or disadvantaged communities in terms of their access to resources as well as being able to shape what those resources look like. This can range from support services to the curriculum, which is often narrowly Eurocentric.

How can we ensure funds for student activists [activities?] are adequate and distributed democratically?

We support there being sufficient moneys available to fund all student activities and activism that benefits the common good on campus, which would include funds being

available by application for additional costs beyond annual allocations, assuming reasonable conditions for their use.

Post-graduate students represent the next generation of university teachers and researchers; they are academics in the making. Their concerns are different from those of undergraduate students and their organisations. University managements have continued to erode the funding available to such organisations, thereby affecting their activities. If PG groups become insolvent, they are then subsumed within undergraduate student unions with only token representation within those unions. Neither within those unions nor as members of Student Representative Councils are PG students then able to progress their own concerns towards effective outcomes.

Student unions are also politicised, with resulting conflict, suppression of dissenting or independent voices, withdrawal of funding, corruption and bullying. This appears to include some annexation by the ALP, with consequent undermining of intellectual freedoms. Universities, including student organisations, should be above politics, and remain fora for the free and respectful discussion of ideas without ideological bias. Only by guaranteeing the financial independence of PG student groups on every campus, separate from undergraduate student unions, and their right to exist, with effective representation to university governing bodies, can the interests of our future scholars best be served.

How should a democratic university work with the community and external stakeholders to determine research priorities? What involvement should the private sector have in our universities? How should university communities determine what is considered a responsible investment?

Use of the term ‘stakeholders’, if understood only in an economic connotation, is not appropriate to universities. The largest ‘stakeholder’ in our universities is the entire Australian population, because all of us are dependent in multiple ways upon the education and research offered by them. That understanding of the term ‘stakeholder’ is not merely economic. The business community has not been a responsible or effective ‘stakeholder’ in this context, but has used its control of the universities to pursue its own agenda.

It is reasonable that universities should undertake research and innovation that benefits the country, but that also requires appropriate economic policies from

government, and major investment in the development, manufacture, and exploitation of research outcomes by both government and the business community onshore and Australian owned, which has not been sufficiently forthcoming. Consequently, universities (and research centres such as the CSIRO) have not been the significant driver of national economic growth and development that governments have envisaged they should be since 1945, re-emphasised with the Dawkins 'reform' and again by the current government. This is not primarily the fault of universities.

Australia has shown a consistent willingness to depend upon research and technology from other countries rather than relying upon domestic research and innovation. This is one reason why the contribution of university- and CSIRO-based research to our economy has remained poor. In order to seriously address the role of university-based research in economically beneficial areas, therefore, it is necessary to consider the larger issues attending our economic under-development, insufficient venture capital investment, and inadequate policy responses. It would be useful to develop a better overview of industries or sectors that can be targeted for support, which could better utilise domestic research outcomes and offer more employment opportunities to some university graduates, sufficient flexible funding for innovation, and a long-term national economic strategy, including realistic means of achieving it. This question is fundamental to the presumed role of universities in relation to our society and economy.

The private sector should have no managerial or decision-making control over any areas of teaching and research. It is appropriate that consultation should occur between universities and business and professional groups to ensure that all universities are providing the standard and content of education expected for employment in their respective areas.

It is appropriate that research funding and projects be submitted to ethical review by academics in the respective universities, and not unilaterally imposed or decided by management or governments. We are very concerned about the increased influence of some business sectors in university governance and in commissioned research, such as the armaments and the fossil fuel industries.

[SLSA Statement of Principles of Ethical Research Practice](#)

We are extremely concerned by the continued interference by the current government and its ministers in areas of education, unilaterally, without their having sufficient qualification, competence or experience, without sectorial or community consultation, beyond their legal right to do so, and often predicated upon false interpretations of this country's social and economic reality. The latest instance of this is government's recurring interference in the ARC, which should be an independent body to distribute public research funding, governed by qualified academics and which engages in an academically rigorous application assessment process. Industry should have no involvement in that process. This appears to be another opportunity for the business community to annex public money to its own advantage, when it should itself be investing in this nation's economic growth and development, including in onshore R&D, which it has not sufficiently done.

<https://www.arc.gov.au/file/12396/download?token=9FIjYF2b>

<https://www.smh.com.au/politics/federal/australia-can-t-afford-politically-biased-grant-funding-20211215-p59hxm.html>

'ARC chief steps down as industry given say in research funding. Canberra demands revamped governance and more applied focus', December 14, 2021, John Ross
Twitter: @JohnRoss49

The prevailing emphasis on economy-related research unacceptably excludes other areas of research equally important for society or the community, primarily HASS research. This is under-funded and under-valued, and we lack quantification of all of the ways in which the country benefits from HASS teaching and research.

Increases in research funding would require permanent commitment to that funding by governments, equality of funding between STEM+ and HASS+ research, simplified application and reporting procedures, more security for necessary long-term funding, and the removal of all unilateral political and ministerial interference.

We suggest that the Greens make estimates of what all of their proposals in this discussion paper would cost, and consider how those costs can be borne in our current economic environment and given other government commitments. In order to justify such funding and persuade the public, they will need to address the underlying

economic ‘principles’ of government that make governments reluctant to spend adequately on ‘public goods’.

How do we ensure students and staff are not subjected to surveillance on campus?

The various forms of surveillance perpetrated by university management are intended to serve specific interests of management to the detriment of academic freedom, civil and human rights. These practices can be addressed by eliminating the managerial ideology that justifies it and of that management itself, and by imposing mandatory compliance of university governance with an adequate guarantee of academic freedoms and of civil rights.

Management should not be monitoring staff email and social media accounts, should not be discouraging union involvement and representation, should not be requiring non-disclosure agreements in redundancy settlements or any other context without showing due cause, and should not be terminating the employment of critical academics under the guise of restructuring.

The transfer of more teaching to online platforms also makes increased direct managerial surveillance of academics and students possible. This could only be prevented or reduced by blocking access to that material by anybody other than the lecturer and students of those courses. Face-to-face teaching generally avoids this risk, except where there is CCTV in classrooms.

<https://www.thesaturdaypaper.com.au/life/education/2021/11/27/academy-silences/163793160012955>

<https://honisoit.com/2021/08/chemistry-genetics-molecular-biology-under-fire-in-uwas-latest-round-of-job-cuts/>

What mechanisms could be put in place to prevent police and university security breaking up student protests?

Student protests have been broken up on campuses because management has invited police to do so, because management denies civil rights and academic freedoms to

staff and students. As with the practice of staff surveillance, so also this denial of a right to protest is now established within our society and implicitly advocated by the current government; it is not a specific university problem. The erosion of rights and freedoms and the application of controlling managerial and social practices therefore requires a robust challenge on a total community level – an explicit refutation of neoliberalism and a positive defence of human and civil rights, including explicit challenge to the attitude of current government that seeks to limit people’s right to protest and strike for legitimate purposes and as a manifestation of democratic process.

Australia infamously lacks any legislated and enforceable protection of human and civil rights; this would not be adequately served by a Bill of Rights. Numerous issues addressed in this discussion are either explicitly defined in terms of human rights in UN documents that Australia has ratified and should therefore be in full compliance with, or are implications of clauses in those agreements. These include the 1966 *International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights*, which sufficiently applies to women, Indigenous Australians, and other population cohorts, as well as addressing education, health, work and employment conditions, union membership and strike action, freedom from invasions of privacy, freedom of speech, and other civil rights. Australian governments and university managements are all in clear breach of many such rights. There is widespread public and political ignorance of those rights, but equally, no evident commitment to respecting and protecting them. In order to address the problems considered here, it is time that politicians confronted this country’s failure over decades to comply with its obligations under those international agreements. The Greens do not have a stronger record on human rights advocacy than either of the major political parties, even if some of their policies are consistent with those human rights.

<https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2020/oct/16/the-real-free-speech-crisis-at-australian-universities-is-the-crackdown-on-protests>

<https://www.theguardian.com/australia-news/2020/oct/14/sydney-university-professor-who-teaches-law-of-protest-arrested-while-watching-student-protest>

<https://www.theguardian.com/australia-news/2020/sep/22/nsw-police-accused-of-political-censorship-over-university-protest-arrests>

What are the barriers to academic freedom and how do we lower them?

Barriers to academic freedom are primarily imposed upon academics and students by powers external to them, such as university management or governments or elements within our society. Academic freedom should be understood to apply to all areas involving academics and students, whether teaching and research, public debate, legitimate criticism, protest and strikes, other campus activities, or the expression of opinions on social media and in other private contexts. The decline in quality and standards of tertiary education effected by university managements (see further below) is also a way of reducing academic freedom, as is public prejudice against universities and their communities.

The underlying managerial ideology that motivates limitations of these freedoms and its instruments needs to be eradicated, and governance required to comply with principles of rights and freedoms towards its own staff and students.

There is the perception that government is also intolerant both of academic freedom in universities and in the education of graduates to be well-informed, independent critical thinkers, and that various measures directed against universities have been intended to suppress such freedom and independence. It is a global problem that governments in particular attack academic freedom.

See *Free to Think 2021, Scholars at Risk Report, Academic Freedom Monitoring Project, New York*. We are now in contact with this group and will be preparing a dossier in the new year of ways in which our university managements suppress freedom of speech and academic freedoms, some specific cases, and the historical background of these problems.

There is a discernible erosion of public acceptance of ‘expertise’, not limited to universities, which requires robust engagement. This has multiple causes, but government is itself complicit in this. This mistrust of expertise is also in its effect a restriction upon academic freedom.

The university, as a centre of learning as well as of public debate and community service, should be an environment within which anything can be freely discussed, no matter how controversial, in a spirit of openness, tolerance and mutual respect, and with investment by participants in any such discussion or learning context in understanding alternative views and the reasons for them. Discussion should be evidence-based and engage with intellectual arguments. Nobody should be subjected to any form of attack for their views, or on any other grounds. A democratic society is by definition one in which people hold a range of views, and enjoy an equal right to do so; it is not one in which some are silenced or pressured to conform or discriminated against.

All members of the university community could be explicitly reminded of the terms of academic freedom and informed that their assent to those principles is assumed. For example, all students at annual enrolment could be presented with a statement on these issues that they are required to agree to, assuming that universities are mandated to comply with a national code of academic freedom and civil and human rights.

<https://www.dese.gov.au/higher-education-reviews-and-consultations/independent-review-adoption-model-code-freedom-speech-and-academic-freedom>

How could we encourage staff and students to engage with and promote First Nations knowledge, research and leadership? What can Australian universities do to advance racial equality in their institutions and on their campuses? What do you think Australian universities can do to ensure research does not further white privilege and racist policies?

It has been an explicit recurring concern of government reviews of the tertiary sector since the 1980s that more Indigenous students, as well as more disabled students and more students from socio-economically disadvantaged backgrounds, should be able to study at university; similarly, that high school completion rates should increase. Additional scholarships and other pro-active policies have been advocated or implemented to that end. A network of Regional University Centres (currently 25 since 2018) and Country University Centres has been established; together with TAFE campuses, these have been incorporated into some universities, and there are also some regional university campuses. These measures, and other involvement with

the Indigenous community, such as Flinders University's involvement with Indigenous health programmes in the NT, should all have improved Indigenous participation. If, despite such measures, Indigenous students still do not have sufficient access, then the reasons for that would need further investigation.

If universities are practising racial discrimination, whether against Indigenous or other ethnic academics, or other forms of discrimination, then this would also require further investigation and appropriate counter-measures to be enforced. Greater integration would be achieved with more Indigenous academics and researchers working across all discipline areas, rather than concentrating on specifically Indigenous areas of knowledge. Indigenous academics should be directly involved in any university-based projects with the Indigenous community (e.g. health, law, social policies).

It should be noted that universities and other employers continue to practise various forms of discrimination, such as age and gender, that this is a national problem, and that despite being widely recognised over many years, it has still not been effectively addressed by government.

Universities have intentionally eroded HASS teaching and research for the past 30 years. In the nature of the case, this would also mean that such Indigenous studies programmes as might exist would also be adversely affected. It is not clear to what extent such erosion has specifically targeted Indigenous studies and academics, and to what extent the reduction of Indigenous studies may have been a consequence of this larger tendency.

Australia has always been a multicultural country, from the diverse Aboriginal communities who lived on these lands prior to colonisation to the many migrant groups who came from overseas afterwards. Australia is now home to people from virtually every country in the world, and as such, it would be similarly appropriate for a selection of our universities to preserve, teach and engage in research on the languages, cultures and histories of all Australians whose heritage is part of Australian identity, culture and history. This is a facet of the meaning of 'the public university'. It would also be of more general public educational value to do so.

This raises the larger question of a need for some rationalisation of our existing universities and campuses, and a structured distribution of academic resources across all states and territories and demographics.

See N. Pearson (2009), *Radical Hope: Education and Equality in Australia*, Quarterly Essay 35.

We agree that there does need to be more financial support available to students and that it is not conducive to their studies to be forced to work to support themselves, that all scholarships should be adequate to costs of living, and that affordable student housing is an issue.

Some residential colleges are private and outside the jurisdiction of universities. Reducing the incidence of inappropriate behaviour in them is a disciplinary matter for the governance of those facilities.

Should international students have access to free higher education in Australia?

Australia had 758,154 full-fee paying international and 1,609,798 domestic student enrolments in 2019. While much of their money has not been spent directly on the costs of their education by management, it is questionable, considering other proposals in this discussion, that our economy could afford to provide free education to both domestic and international students without enormous and permanent increases to government budgets for tertiary education, and without major tax reform and economic growth to support such public expenditure.

The European comparisons cited in the discussion paper do not reflect the numbers or other circumstances involved in Australia, and are therefore not a suitable point of comparison.

We would support all post-secondary education being free for domestic students as an aspirational goal, assuming other measures taken to ensure that this is sustainable.

Should a clearer pathway to permanent residency for international students be given upon completion of their degree?

The usual reason for students studying in other countries is that they have education and training opportunities internationally which they may not have in their home countries, and that they then return to their own countries to contribute what they have learned. This is the expectation of most exchange and scholarship programmes.

There is no obvious reason why international students who have completed a course of study in Australia should be offered expedited or privileged processes towards permanent residency and citizenship over other such applicants. An argument in support of such a proposal would need to show cause, particularly when other migrants are also expected to bring knowledge and skills with them that are supposedly beneficial to this country, and when Australians also have, or should have, that same knowledge and those skills.

Australia had approximately one third of its entire domestic working-age population under- or unemployed before COVID-19, many of whom are also tertiary graduates. Specifically in the higher education sector, 40,000+ academics and other staff have lost their positions since May 2020, many of whom will not obtain new, appropriate jobs. We must work towards ensuring that 100% of our own working population have secure, appropriately remunerated jobs of their choice throughout their working lives, before hiring talent from overseas.

GENERAL DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

What policy proposal excites you the most?

That all academics who wish to be full-time continuing employed with reasonable opportunities for career advancement and secure employment, should be.

What does 'democratising universities' mean to you?

'Democratising universities' means that they should be governed by their own academics, support staff, students, and representatives of the wider community. It means eradicating all corporate managerialism and its mechanisms from them, and protecting universities from political interference.

As recipients of public funding, universities should be accountable to government, and through it to the general public, but this should be non-partisan, without ideological bias, and it should be exercised actively by education ministers, their de-politicised departments, and by opposition and cross-bench education spokespersons, all of whom should be fully apprised of the situation in our universities as part of their job descriptions.

How do you think we can best achieve our policy goals?

The Greens cannot achieve any significant reform of our universities without the support of the two major political parties, unless they are able to mobilise sufficient public pressure on government to force change. That mobilisation must reach beyond the Greens' own support base.

The Greens should work together with all identifiable groups who are seeking or who might seek these changes, and for all of whom there may be mutual benefits in collaboration.

We need a detailed plan for the complete reform of our higher education system, which this discussion paper presumably aims to contribute to. We suggest that the European university system provides the best model upon which to build. Such a plan should be informed by a comprehensive understanding of education policy in this country since 1945, and of the current reality in our universities from all perspectives. It should also display a detailed understanding of European education systems beyond that which is readily available from online sources and published data (e.g. EU, OECD), and beyond sample cases (e.g. Sweden).

The general public needs to be better informed of the nature and extent of the problems, and to understand how they are all affected, directly or indirectly, by these problems, so that they will want to see change.

This will necessitate mainstream media providing sustained and more informed coverage of the issues and performing an educative role. An attempt could also be made to ensure that major university reform becomes an election issue.

The Greens could campaign for a Royal Commission or Senate Inquiry into the tertiary education sector. However, there have in the past been numerous reviews of and inquiries into the sector that have not resulted in a better university system, so that yet another one would need to be radically different. The effectiveness of such an inquiry depends upon its terms of reference, its commissioners or committee members, and its time frame and sufficient funding. The government of the day is under no obligation to implement any recommendations that may arise, and even considerable public interest in other recent and historical Royal Commissions and Senate Inquiries has not resulted in the changes desired by the public. Therefore, before advocating such an inquiry, the Greens should consider whether this would indeed achieve the desired reforms, what other measures could be taken to ensure that

recommendations would be implemented, or whether other strategies rather than such an inquiry might be more effective.

We do not support piecemeal changes, but a complete reform that addresses all of the causes and consequences of the crises in our universities, and a fundamental re-imagining of what a public university should be. The commercial corporate or ‘enterprise’ university in Australia is an anomaly, an aberration: it is not an American model, nor is it similar to European university systems. It only resembles the current situation in the UK (largely excepting Oxford and Cambridge), which is also in a state of deep crisis.

Many of the issues mentioned here are not specific or unique to our universities, but reflect attitudes and practices common in other areas of employment and in community groups, and which have *also* been introduced into our universities. They are also matters upon which government has failed to provide a positive example. If these issues are to be effectively addressed, and if the community is to be made more conscious of them, then there would need to be more tolerant, respectful, and better-informed public debate around them, and better policy development on related and analogous problems.

There is no sense in which the corporate management of Australian universities can be claimed to have been ‘good’. The current crises afflicting the sector could and should have been avoided. Managements have caused incalculable harm to tens of thousands of academics, students and other staff, and to the wider community, contravened rights, academic freedoms, and their duty of care. They have misrepresented their situation to government and the public and sought to evade scrutiny and accountability. They have gone very far towards entirely destroying any quality higher education in this country. They have not embodied or practised their own rhetoric or mission statements or internationally accepted principles of good leadership and management. They have instead routinely achieved the exact opposite of ostensible policy intentions, and they have done all of this at enormous taxpayer expense - and our governments have helped them to do it. This is inexcusable.

What are some of the challenges we are likely to face in campaigning for better universities?

Public ignorance of and complacency towards the seriousness and nature of the problems in our universities.

There is a strong anti-intellectual attitude within the community that is opposed to, or not interested in, strong and diverse institutions of higher education. That attitude has directly informed the Dawkins 'reform', managerial mistreatment of academics, public attacks on universities, the 'culture wars', and attitudes expressed by current government ministers. There is also considerable public indifference towards and prejudice against universities.

Both major political parties have neglected the problems in our universities for which they are ultimately responsible and have helped to cause over the past 30 years. Accepting greater responsibility for change will require a reversal of their ideology of small government and limited regulation, of prejudice against universities within their ranks, as well as a bipartisan commitment in office to adequately fund our universities for purpose.

University managements and their peak bodies will strongly oppose changes suggested here, because these changes would entail removal of their entire apparatus of managerial corporatisation, and consequently loss or reduction of their employment, power and privilege. They currently have an arsenal of means at their disposal to defend their interests, and are not afraid to deploy them.

The academic community is extremely demoralised, divided, and at risk of loss of their jobs, so that they will find it difficult to mobilise in strong and united support of the demand for major change, without active protection against punitive measures by management.

We support the right of all university staff and students to be members of a union and to be free to engage in strike action; this is also defined as a human right which this country has agreed to fully comply with, so that any attempt to prevent this is a breach of those human rights.

How do we guarantee universities' independence while also ensuring they are democratic places that serve the public good?

The greatest threat to universities' independence is posed by their corporate managements. That threat is active, not latent, and managements must therefore be removed. State and Commonwealth governments have ensured that university

managements are *de facto* 'independent'. The academics working in them, however, are not.

The concept of a 'public good' is no longer generally understood or accepted by many in our society, and the basic justification of it, as well as an accepted definition, need to be re-asserted. Reducing all education to job qualifications, eliminating any education not obviously serving such a purpose, discouraging critical and independent thinking and denying a high level of knowledge in graduates, and regarding knowledge as a commercial commodity with no other value, mean that education is not perceived to be a 'public good'. A 'public good' is something that benefits an entire society, which cannot be quantified, and which society is willing to bear the costs for. If all education is viewed as benefiting only the individual in their exercise of a job or profession and the income they derive from it, with no recognised but less tangible contribution to the community and no measurable non-monetary value, then how can education ever be a 'public good'? It has been utterly eviscerated of any such meaning. This is the prevailing neoliberal assumption, and it is firmly embedded within both major political parties and the business community as well as in other sectors of the population.

What applies here to universities also applies to all other areas once considered to be 'public goods', including a national public school system fit for purpose, a sufficiently resourced national public health system, a liveable and dignified and non-discriminatory welfare system, and other public services and infrastructure. In none of these areas has there been, particularly over recent decades, any adequate commitment by governments.

What do you think Australian universities can do to contribute to scholarship that is anti-racist?

Australian universities could contribute to anti-racist scholarship by ensuring job security and academic freedoms. Too many scholars feel coerced into avenues of research (and sometimes teaching) that aligns with widespread neoliberal assumptions of what is useful or productive. When discussions of topics such as critical race theory turn hostile in the public sphere, scholars who fear for their livelihoods are unlikely to engage in anti-racist scholarship or include anti-racist perspectives in course curricula. Instead, academics must have both the job security and the academic

freedom to push boundaries and ask uncomfortable questions of both academia and government.

We must address the problem that our *entire* tertiary education system is in dire straits, and not even capable of delivering adequate education and training in non-controversial or progressive areas. Resolving systemic issues such as a lack of job security and academic freedom, however, will also help ensure that scholarship can move beyond simply not being racist and work towards being actively anti-racist. Job security is *essential* to academic freedoms.

Should we link government funding to our desired changes like greater security of employment?

Australian governments have intentionally reduced their funding of universities over several decades. They have forced universities to seek increased revenue streams from other sources, most obviously from full fee paying international students. We need a permanent commitment by both major parties to fully fund our universities for purpose, which will mean incremental increases for inflation, wage rises and increases in other costs. This will in turn require significant tax reform and a more robust and diversified economy. Universities should not be financially vulnerable by being forced to depend upon non-public revenue sources.

Reduced government funding has not, however, alone caused the current crises in our universities, and increasing funding without removing the apparatus of corporate management will not guarantee greater employment security or other improvements.

In December 2020, our universities had combined assets of an estimated \$61 billion, and were forecast to remain financially fluid to at least 2024 on projected enrolments and associated funding. They have chosen not to use those assets in order to retain all of their staff, or to reduce casualization, or to address other issues requiring greater budgetary allocation. Managements have therefore pursued another agenda not compatible with maintaining either optimal academic employment or low teacher-student ratios or high standards and quality of education. It is that agenda that must be eliminated.

See Parliament of Australia, Senate, *Second interim report: insecurity in publicly-funded jobs*, October 2021, chapters 7-10, on casualization in the university sector.

What would you add to this discussion paper?

(1) Academic employment.

We support the complete elimination of all academic casual employment, except for those who voluntarily prefer it; particularly those who may temporarily prefer casual employment but later wish to hold a F/T position should be able to do so.

Those who choose to be employed on a casual basis should be employed with benefits and entitlements commensurate with those of ongoing staff, and should be fully paid for all work actually done in accordance with their duties.

All Australian universities should be required to report their casual employees (in all forms), during semester when contracts are active, and prevented from under-reporting, which they have engaged in.

On the principle that casual employment is generally unacceptable, we also advocate full employment for support staff, preferably directly by universities and not through labour hire companies.

Universities have during the pandemic dramatically increased their use of online teaching and consequently reduced face-to-face on-campus teaching. There are indications that they now intend to continue this practice as a permanent form of course delivery, irrespective of how appropriate this is. This means significant reduction of academic employment and increased casualisation. It also means further decline in student satisfaction, when an estimated 50% of students are not satisfied with their online teaching and the lack of opportunities for other campus engagement. It also means that with further decline of F/T academic employment, this country's capacity to continue generating knowledge, to maintain its national knowledge resource in the persons of its academics, as well as further research potential, are proportionately depleted. Face-to-face teaching, including small tutorial classes, are pedagogically preferable.

We recommend consideration of the re-introduction of academic tenure.

There should be sufficient opportunity for academics to obtain positions at all stages of their careers. They should not be subject to age or gender or racial discrimination, and should be retained in employment until legal retirement age. Emphasis on 'early career' opportunities has effectively discriminated against disadvantaged mid-career

academics, and under current circumstances, academics who lose their position at one university do not tend to be employed by another. They are then lost to the sector, which constitutes major personal disadvantage and an irreplaceable loss to the community.

There should be more discussion around the recruitment of early career overseas scholars while qualified Australian academics are being left unemployed in their own country, or reduced to casual academic employment, or forced out of the sector. This is not an acceptable or desirable trend. All qualified Australians should have sufficient career opportunities in their own country, and we should be capable of training future academics in every discipline area that this country needs.

Australia has a proportionately high rate of PhD graduates, and the quality of those PhDs appears to be in some decline. Nonetheless, it is essential that we educate sufficient numbers of scholars in all discipline areas and ensure that they are able to transition directly from PhDs into F/T continuing employment, and to retain such employment throughout their working lives. This is not a guarantee of academic employment for every PhD graduate, but at least for as many quality graduates as our education and research system requires. Those graduates would also normally be employed in the TAFE system and by other providers.

EBAs and all standardised evaluation and performance metrics need to be abolished. Academic staff should be paid according to a standard award, with entitlements and benefits, enjoy working conditions commensurate with good health and safety, and this should be guaranteed and legally enforceable. These should not be matters of negotiation, where the staff of some universities will fare better than others. Academics should periodically be assessed, but this should be by academic colleagues, and it should only occur every 3-5 years or with an application for promotion. Corporate performance metrics are not appropriate to academic work, and are not a measure of quality. The principle of 'demand' is also counter-productive.

We support the right of all academics to engage in both teaching and funded research, and some teaching could reflect academics' research. Academics should be at liberty to pursue any topic of research they wish.

F/T academics have on average been working ca. 20 hours/week overtime, unpaid or for reduced compensation. All academics should be able to complete their designated tasks within the hours for which they are contracted and paid. Some additional tasks are unnecessary and could be abolished, while others could be performed by more

support staff. Workloads have already increased during COVID-19, and can be expected to continue worsening as more academics are made redundant and their work has to be done by those remaining, in addition to their own work.

The extreme stress of excessive workloads and job insecurity and the actions of managements have contributed to academics having a mental health incidence level of 50%, which is 2.5 times higher than the national average and than other reported cohorts. This situation has remained unchanged for at least 10 years. The causes of these problems and associated physical problems and voluntary attrition need to be effectively addressed.

Teacher-student ratios at our universities are currently on average 1:30.5, with half of our universities higher than this or they have not provided data. It would be desirable to reduce this to 1:10 at all universities and across all discipline areas and teaching modes (including online and tutorials), calculated on the basis of F/T academic staff only. This is a serious problem affecting both academics themselves and the reduced quality of education provided to students.

<https://www.timeshighereducation.com/student/best-universities/top-universities-best-student-staff-ratio-2021>

If teacher-student ratios are to be reduced accordingly; if we are to provide teaching in all discipline areas in all universities to established minimum standards, including mandatory core course content in all universities, and subjects currently not, or only poorly, represented here; if we are to ensure that sufficient Australians are educated and trained and to have stable career paths from PhD graduation through to retirement age, and to be able to replace natural attrition, across all discipline areas which we need; if we are to reduce casualization to the estimated 20% of current sessional academic staff who wish to be casually employed; and if we are to ensure that all job descriptions (including research) can be met within the time contracted and paid for, then we would need to educate and employ approximately 4 times as many F/T academics as we currently do for current enrolment numbers. The losses of academic staff sustained particularly over the past 18 months, but also over the longer period, are unsustainable, and cannot be remedied foreseeably for at least a decade.

See Littleton, E. and Stanford, J. (2021), *An Avoidable Catastrophe: Pandemic job losses in higher education and their consequences*, September, The Australia Institute, Centre for Future Work, Canberra.

Universities are any nation's principal repository of knowledge, and that knowledge resides primarily in the heads of their academics. Sacking academics, denying sufficient and stable career paths and employment to them, and under-funding universities *in toto* or in particular areas of knowledge and expertise, all diminish a nation's knowledge resource. Australia has allowed incalculable, massive erosion of that knowledge resource.

There has been a trend to award professorial titles to people who have not earned them through a normal academic career path and who may not even have an earned PhD. This practice should stop. Honorary academic degrees are usually awarded for an actual academic contribution or for a community contribution commensurate with such academic work, and should always be qualified as such, e.g. with the addition of *honoris causa* (h.c.). The specifically academic meaning and value of all degrees and titles must be restored.

(2) *The Concept of the 'Public University'*.

We understand the adjective 'public' in two complementary senses. (1) In contradistinction to 'private', in the legal sense that public universities are entities established and properly owned by the entire community; that their governance should be fully transparent and accountable to the people; that they are not for-profit enterprises or corporations or 'industries', and that all moneys generated by them should be re-invested directly in the delivery of their public *raison d'être* of teaching and research. (2) That universities exist to provide the best possible education of all students (whether by formal degree courses or by other means of public education), who in their employment and engagement will then benefit the community; that their academic expertise should contribute to and benefit the community at multiple levels, including government and public debate; that education consists in the full development of the whole human person and their potential, and that it should serve to maintain a civil democratic society; that their research activities benefit not only the national economy but also all other areas of society; and that in the persons of

their academic staff they constitute a permanent, irreplaceable knowledge resource that should remain accessible to the entire community, as also the collective cultural memory of the nation.

Both of these aspects are currently absent from Australia's conception of and practice in relation to our universities, and need to be reasserted.

Further consideration could be given to ways in which academic community involvement could be extended and enhanced, so that they do genuinely better serve the community.

See e.g.:

Busch, L. (2017), *Knowledge for Sale: The Neoliberal Takeover of Higher Education*, Boston: MIT Press.

Collini, S. (2012), *What Are Universities For?* London: Penguin.

Collini, S. (2017), *Speaking of Universities*, London: Verso.

Connell, R. (2019), *The Good University: What Universities actually do and why it's time for radical change*, London: ZED Books.

Davis, G., (2017), *The Australian Idea of a University*, Melbourne: Melbourne University Press.

Devinney T. and Dowling, G. (2020), *The Strategy of Australia's Universities: Revise and Resubmit*, Melbourne: Palgrave Macmillan.

Donoghue, F. (2008), *The Last Professors: The Twilight of the Humanities in the Corporate University*, New York: Fordham University Press.

Ergul, H. and Cosar, S. (eds.) (2017), *Universities in the Neoliberal Era*, Melbourne: Palgrave-McMillan.

Flemming, P. (2021), *Dark Academia: How Universities Die*, London: Pluto Press.

Forsyth, H. (2014), *A History of the Modern Australian University*, Sydney: University of New South Wales Press.

Hil, R. (2011), *Whackademia: An Insider's Account of the Troubled University*, Sydney: New South.

Hil, R. (2015), *Selling Students Short: Why You Won't get the University Education you Deserve*, Sydney: Allen and Unwin.

Hil, R., Lyons, K. and Thompsett, F. (forthcoming), *Transforming Higher Education in the Midst of Global Crisis: A University for the Common Good*, London: Routledge.

- Marginson, S., and Considine, M. (2000), *The Enterprise University: Power, Governance and Reinvention in Australia*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Morrish, L. (2017), *Neoliberalism and the Academy: Have you Drunk the Kool-Aid?*, Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Nichols, T. (2017), *The Death of Expertise: The Campaign against Established Knowledge and Why It Matters*, Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Sims, M. (2020), *Bullshit Tower: Neoliberalism and Managerialism in Universities*, Oxford: Peter Lang.
- Shore, C., & Wright, S. (2017), *Privatising the Public University: Key Trends, Countertrends and Alternatives*, New York: Independent Publishing.
- Tuchman, G., (2011), *Wannabe U: Inside the Corporate University*, Chicago: University of Chicago.
- Watts, R. (2017), *Public Universities, Managerialism and the Value of Higher Education*, Melbourne: Palgrave Macmillan.

(3) *What is education?*

An education should facilitate the full development of an individual's personality and potential, and this should occur without an emphasis upon employment. Such education serves other purposes than merely qualifying people for a job. The consistent emphasis of education policy in Australia has tended to under-value those other benefits and to be therefore dehumanising. Our universities should be able to offer every matriculated Australian, or international student, opportunities to study any subject of interest in the spectrum of human knowledge and achievement.

A humanistic conception of education arguably still underpins European education systems, and also in some measure, that in the United States.

Australia should have a sufficiently developed and diversified economy capable of appropriately employing all of its population in career paths in which they can contribute to the community, consistent with the development of their individual personality and potential. We do not have such an economy and society, and education policy in this country has always been poorly integrated with economic and employment questions and the need for sufficient opportunities.

(4) *Academic quality and standards.*

There are various indications that the academic quality and standards of degree programmes in our universities have fallen since the 1980s. This includes pressure upon academics to pass students who have not met minimum standards; the elimination of what used to be core course content across all discipline areas, primarily as a cost-cutting exercise and in response to national economic priorities, including omission of necessary education in professional areas such as Medicine (the responsible accreditation bodies are not ensuring that students have been fully educated in all areas essential to the exercise of their professions, or have lacked the leverage on university managements to do so); lower requirements for degrees here than comparable requirements in international university systems, including formal requirements for PhDs; the absence or poor representation of teaching and research in discipline areas commonly taught and researched in international university systems; failure to address repeated complaints by government and employers that graduates should be sufficiently educated in ill-defined skills; and the combination of multiple professional subjects into single degrees in a superficial and random manner that does not constitute adequate professional qualifications in any of the areas of such degrees.

There is evidently also insufficient preparation of students for tertiary studies in high schools. The correlations between high schools and universities, of how poor teacher training in universities then contributes to poor high school performance, do not seem to be adequately recognised. Our teachers need to be better educated by universities. In order to adequately prepare students for tertiary education, they need to have already acquired a reasonable standard of necessary skills and knowledge in high school. Numerous problems in our national school system have not been effectively addressed over decades, and teacher training standards are but one issue among many others, such as the high attrition rate among young teachers, worsening casualization and age discrimination in that sector as well.

It would be reasonable to expect that every university offering any degree in any discipline area should be formally required to provide uniform core course content and that academics, not managers, should determine whether or not students have satisfied minimum standards through rigorous assessments. Such national mandated standards are essential for the reliability of education in all professional areas, and would need to be pro-actively enforced.

A concern with quality and standards is a recurring issue through many government reviews of the sector over decades, but either no effective measures have been implemented to address the reasons for that concern, or such measures as have been implemented have failed to achieve their purpose.

TEQSA (established 2011) was expected to be an independent body to enforce minimum standards and quality across the sector, but clearly has not done so. TEQSA does not appear to be appropriately informed by academic or sectorial expertise. These issues need to be investigated and more adequately resolved, including explicit stipulation of minimum course content and standards for all degree programmes. It should not be at the discretion of university managements to determine their own standards or accreditation, or to act in any manner conducive to the erosion of such standards.

Improved standards would require enormously increased employment of lecturing staff (as noted above), radical lowering of current teacher-student ratios, improvement in the working conditions of all academics, and adequate funding for support, remedial and tuition services for students on campus.

(5) *Studies.*

Many students do not know what they wish to study or which career they wish to choose either during high school when they are already expected to make pertinent decisions or when they commence at university. In international comparison, Australian students begin university on average one or two years earlier than their peers in many other countries, and in comparison with the US system of graduate schools, Australians commence professional qualifying courses as much as 4-6 years earlier than their American peers.

They are also pressured by government and universities to complete their studies as quickly as possible.

This is not ideal for many students, who would benefit from being allowed greater freedom to choose different subjects on trial without being expected to complete a degree in any given subject, and from being permitted to take longer to complete their studies. Allowing this would help to reduce attrition rates, while permitting students to find and pursue study programmes and then careers that are appropriate to them.

Australia should consider supporting (including with funding or scholarships) more international exchange programmes for its undergraduate students, in the same way that other countries do. Such exchange programmes do not need to be specific to their studies here or to their anticipated career paths. They could run for 6-12 months; they should not all be to Anglophone countries or an overseas campus of an Australian university. They would require an uncomplicated accreditation process of work completed both in Australia prior to undertaking that exchange and of work completed during the exchange towards their degree here.

<https://theconversation.com/2-out-of-3-members-of-university-governing-bodies-have-no-professional-expertise-in-the-sector-theres-the-making-of-a-crisis-171952>

<https://johnmenadue.com/education-left-behind-in-the-corporatisation-of-our-universities/>

"Unis offered as few as 1 in 100 casuals permanent status in 2021. Why aren't conversion rules working for these staff?" — <https://theconversation.com/unis-offered-as-few-as-1-in-100-casuals-permanent-status-in-2021-why-arent-conversion-rules-working-for-these-staff-172046>

"After 2 years of COVID, how bad has it really been for university finances and staff?" — <https://theconversation.com/after-2-years-of-covid-how-bad-has-it-really-been-for-university-finances-and-staff-172405>

Academics for Public Universities: publicuniversities.org

We are a member of the group Public Universities Australia:

<https://puau.org/https-puau-org-2021-12-07-lift-off-document-public-universities-australia/>