



UNIVERSITY
OF WOLLONGONG
AUSTRALIA

Submission: Labor's Inquiry into Post-Secondary Education

Introduction

The University of Wollongong (UOW) recognises the importance of Australia having a relevant, well structured, high quality and accessible post-secondary education system to ensure our nation continues to be prosperous, highly educated and competitive.

UOW welcomes Labor's plan to undertake a National Inquiry into Australia's post-secondary education system, and provides the following key points for consideration when framing the Terms of Reference for this Inquiry.

About the University of Wollongong

UOW is a research-intensive university that has built a strong international reputation for world-class research and exceptional teaching quality, and is ranked amongst the top 2% of Universities worldwide. In 2016 UOW had over 33,900 total student enrolments across its global campus network and more than 2,400 staff (Full Time Equivalent). The University offers more than 400 undergraduate/postgraduate courses and research degrees across a wide range of disciplines through the five broad faculties of Business, Engineering and Information Sciences, Law, Humanities and the Arts, Science, Medicine and Health and, Social Sciences. UOW is an international multi-campus university, with three Sydney campuses (at Loftus, Liverpool and Sydney CBD), Wollongong, Shoalhaven, Batemans Bay, Bega, and the Southern Highlands. The University also has campuses in Hong Kong and Dubai.

UOW Enterprises

UOW Enterprises (UOWE) is a subsidiary group of UOW. Established in 1988, UOWE owns and operates the University of Wollongong in Dubai, UOW College and the Community College of City University Hong Kong. UOWE delivers quality higher and vocational education and training on an international scale with its institutions offering over 100 courses including higher education, vocational training, English language and professional development programs to over 12,000 students annually.

UOW College

UOW College is one of Australia's longest operating university pathway providers. Since 1988, more than 29,000 students from 70 different countries have graduated from UOWC. UOWC provides a supportive learning environment where students build skills and knowledge through the delivery of quality academic pathway programs, vocational courses and attracts both school leavers and mature aged students who are provided guaranteed UOW offers at the successful completion of their pathway program. UOWC also provides English language programs for tertiary study, IELTS preparation as well as general English and the College is an official IELTS Test and Occupational English Test Centre.

UOWC:

- Is a registered Higher Education and CRICOS provider with higher education and English language programs accredited by the Tertiary Education Quality Standards Agency.
- Is a registered Training Organisation and CRICOS provider with Vocational training package qualifications accredited by Australian Skills Quality Authority.
- Has all English language programs quality assured in line with the National ELT Accreditation Scheme.

- Is part of the University English Centres Australia network and a member of English Australia, International Education Association of Australia, the Council of Private Higher Education Incorporated and, the Australian Council for Private Education and Training.

Key Points for Consideration in Formation of Inquiry Terms of Reference

- UOW supports a comprehensive Inquiry that looks at both Australia's higher education and vocational sectors, noting that currently the two systems are disjointed and there is significant opportunity to create synergies between the two in order to achieve better outcomes for students and the national economy.
- It is important that the Inquiry take a holistic view of Australia's higher education and vocational sectors, and with appreciation for the important role many private vocational providers play in educating and training students. Despite their reputation being tarnished by a number of unethical private operators within Australia, it is noted that vocational providers such as UOWC are of high quality and focussed on achieving positive student outcomes.
There are great benefits in having a robust private vocational sector, including: models which cater to disadvantaged students; the ability to offer a personalised and individualised experience catering for specific needs and; smaller class sizes.
- It is critical that the Inquiry establish best practice models vis-à-vis student preparedness and smooth transitions from post secondary education into higher education whether it be vocational or university level study
- It is also noted that current competition between private vocational providers and TAFE in Australia is creating a less than optimal vocational education sector. The Inquiry Terms of Reference should provide for an analysis on how to ensure that the vocational sector is of high quality, focussed on student outcomes, and competitive; not simply dominated by TAFE.
- It is highly recommended that the Inquiry Terms of Reference include a review of offshore education models which integrate the higher education and vocational sectors, and that key learnings and successes of these good practice models be adapted into the Australian system. For example, the German education model has been heralded a success which equips students with skills in a vocational qualification before they enter the higher education sector.
- Further, the Inquiry should also look at ways the higher education and vocational sectors can work together to better equip higher education students to meet industry needs so that they are ready for employment upon completion of their studies. For example, UOW College has implemented micro credentialing, which involves adding vocational skills sets of individual units to higher education to make them more employable.
- It is also critical that the Inquiry look at making student access to funding more equitable for vocational students, including those enrolled with private providers. Currently UOWC vocational students pay a 25 percent loan fee, which inhibits some potential students' access to a high quality vocational program provided by a university private provider.
- Access to universities, VET and other higher education facilities in regions is important to ensure students from regional, rural and remote areas are given opportunity to undertake further education beyond school. It is recommended that the Inquiry also consider the current level of access students from regional and remote areas of Australia have to quality higher education, and consider ways by which this could be improved.

Further Information

The University would welcome further opportunities to elaborate upon, or further clarify, the matters raised within this submission. To do so, please do not hesitate to contact the UOW Director, Government Relations (Mr Canio Fierravanti) on 42215931 or via caniof@uow.edu.au.