

## Submission to the Australian Universities Accord – Interim Report

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While I don't have concerns about those recommendations that are in the Interim Report, I am greatly concerned at the omission of "**research**" to the extent that its priority does not warrant a "Priority Action" of any kind.

Research in Australia is very clearly languishing. We are near the bottom of the OECD in terms of research investment and nowhere is this more pronounced than in universities. The success rates for grant applications hover around 10%. 9/10 of academic's time is wasted when applying for grants. More importantly **research** plays a fundamental role in tertiary education.

Tertiary education is intended to bring students (at least in STEM) to the "edge of knowledge" and then provide them with the skills and experience to move that edge forward. Over a period of time after graduation the 'edge of knowledge' for a particular graduating student becomes obsolete, as new knowledge is continually added. **Research** is not simply going to the library to look something up, but involves inquisitive and / or hypothesis driven experimentation. Such experimentation requires skills and experience – usually with mentoring by an experienced researcher / academic. The funding of these experiments is vital. Students need to learn what to do when the currently accepted edge of knowledge is reached. The fact that students need to learn these skills means that they typically have higher rates of failure than research conducted by research only institutes (where the participants have quite often achieved their training elsewhere). To expect the funding of university research to compete directly with that for research institutes denies the reality that students need to undertake the transition from under-graduate to post-graduate training – and that this transition requires specific (additional) funding.

I have retired, so have no direct interest any more. However, I see young academics struggling to be able to find the resources (funding) to train the next generation of researchers. University administrations do not currently provide sufficient internal funds. In addition, many of the new university academic appointments are essentially teaching only (and typically short term). The current federal funding mechanisms are promoting a situation where universities are primarily undergraduate teaching facilities, with the **research** that is still being conducted in Australia, primarily being conducted at "Research Institutes". This separation of teaching and research diminishes both.

I therefore urge you to add another "Priority Action". That of an acknowledgement of the nexus between tertiary education and research at the "edge of knowledge" and the need for targeted 'research training' funds that are adequate and certain enough to sustain the transition from undergraduate to post-graduate training and facilitate first time research experience.

Thank you for your consideration in this matter – it is greatly appreciated.