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Australian Universities Accord Panel
Department of Education
GPO Box 9880
Canberra ACT 2601
Australia

Dear Professor O’Kane and the Australian Universities Accord Panel

Re: CQUniversity priorities for the review of the Australian Universities Accord

I write to provide you with CQUniversity’s priorities, for your review of Australia’s higher education system and the Australian Universities Accord. I look forward to assisting further as the review unfolds in 2023.

As you will appreciate, our priorities are informed by our position as Queensland’s largest regional university and Queensland’s only dual-sector university, as well as the unique nature of our student cohort. Based on 2020 student data, CQUniversity maintains the highest proportion of low SES students amongst its domestic undergraduate student cohort of any Australian university. We are ranked number one nationally by the Good Universities Guide for Social Equity, with 38 per cent of our domestic students coming from low socioeconomic or disadvantaged backgrounds.

In addition, compared with other Australian universities, we maintain the second highest proportion of regional/remote students and the third highest proportion of Indigenous students. CQUniversity is ranked second in Australia for first-in-family students, and third nationally (first in Queensland) for full-time graduate employment rates. Finally, a typical CQUniversity student is often mature-aged (over 25 years), and part-time.

In this context, CQUniversity’s highest priorities for the Review Panel are the following:

- *Meeting Australia’s knowledge and skills needs, now and in the future*

CQUniversity is strongly of the view that regional universities should be supported to remain “comprehensive” teaching and research universities, to ensure the communities we serve continue to thrive. We undertake research with regional industries, for regional communities, which drives innovation and informs teaching. Regional communities do not have the luxury of several local Higher Education providers and it would be detrimental to specialise regional universities, thus limiting their scope to support regional prosperity.

- *Access and opportunity*

Prioritising the importance of a sustainable and equitable funding model for higher education that supports regional access and attainment is critical.

CQUniversity has a social charter to operate in thin regional markets. However, this means our business model is very different to that of metropolitan universities. We also service a vastly different student cohort, which can often involve higher costs in challenging locations. It is critical that the Government continues to support (and invest) in regional universities to improve access and attainment levels in regional Australia.

- *The connection between the vocational education and training and higher education systems Governance, accountability and community*

It is essential that all governments (Federal and State) work together, to drive greater engagement and alignment between the higher education and vocational training sectors. While significant policy and regulatory reform will be required, so too is investment in aging TAFE infrastructure and equipment.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide input to the Panel's early deliberations. I look forward to assisting you and the Panel further in the near future.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Nick Klomp". The signature is written in a cursive, slightly slanted style.

Professor Nick Klomp
Vice-Chancellor and President
CQUniversity