

5 February 2025

Committee Secretary
Senate Education and Employment Committees
PO Box 6100
Parliament House
Canberra ACT 2600

Dear Committee,

I tender the following outlining my concerns about the adequacy of the powers available to the Tertiary Education Quality and Standards Agency to perform its role in identifying and addressing corporate governance issues at Australian higher education providers.

I have over 20 years experience in the delivery of higher education and vocational training as a professional TAFE teacher where I have delivered into and assessed students at the Bachelor level in degree courses and as an expert maritime industry trainer and assessor. A summary of my education and training experience is annexed to this submission.

Governance

I have considerable concern regard the transparency of the University governing bodies for which I have previously worked for (2022) and the transparency of their decision processes regarding the apparent absence of an articulated risk assessments covering the acceptance of lower entry and pass standards for degree level courses. The consequences of both lower entry and pass standards range from possible catastrophic injury in vocational areas to damage to Australia's multi-billion dollar education sector's reputation. University governing bodies have a fundamental conflict of interest between making money and setting standards.

Reporting

Additionally as a tax payer I am concerned about the absence of easily accessible financial reporting covering the outcomes of grants awarded by the Australian Research Council. In the European Union and the United Kingdom grants are audited against researcher outputs. This does not seem to be the case in Australia. For example, The Australian Solar Thermal Research Institute (ASTRI) is an eight-year, \$87 million international research collaboration to deliver cost reductions and dispatchability improvements, as well as position Australia in concentrating solar thermal (CST) power. When will ASTRI actually produce an outcome other than a literature review?

Further there seems to be no reporting of the resources promised by ARC recipients under their proposals against actual such as full time equivalent hours funded by the recipients and

the hours actually used. University governing bodies are trusted with public monies and there seems to little or no reporting and/or accountability. This is indicative of a failure of both University governing bodies and possibly by Tertiary Education Quality and Standards Agency not requiring or enforcing procedures/standards for accounting transparency.

Conclusion

Based on my extensive experience in areas of training delivered under Commonwealth regulatory authority audit (the Australian Maritime Safety Authority), the higher education sector and the vocational sectors Australian Skills Quality Authority (ASQA) the role of the Tertiary Education Quality and Standards Agency seems to be missing. University governing bodies seem free to either make it up as they are going along (*ex tempore excognitamus*) without explaining the risk they are accepting or an understanding of the damage they can potentially do to our (Australia's) reputation as education providers. This would indicate a failure(s) of corporate governance, and a need for accountability of University sector governing bodies.

Yours Sincerely

Ian Gray, MEd, Grad Dip Bus (Ship), Dip Mar Stud, AFNI
Master Mariner, Commander RANR

Summary of Experience – Ian Gray

1. I have 40 years experience in training and the maritime industry with a strong mix of operations and management at all levels. I have:

- 12 years experience in navigating and commanding commercial vessels;
- 16 years at sea and ashore in the Australian Defence Force;
- 5 years exclusively in the allied area of marine survey and stevedoring, with my own marine survey practice;
- 10 plus years experience in managing and delivering maritime studies teaching in a wide range of teaching environments, including the use of simulation for training; and
- 3 years as a licensed coastal pilot.

2. I commenced my career in the Australian maritime industry as a Deck Officer with the Australian National Line in 1978. I progressed in the industry with various appointments on a variety of vessels reaching a senior positions in 1988. I left the Australian maritime industry in 1989 to take up an appointment with the Royal Australian Navy where I was awarded a RAN Pilot Qualification 31 March 1992. I separated from the permanent Navy in 1997 and have remained an active Reserve Officer to the present.

3. I have held a Master Class 1 Certificate of Competency (CoC) issued by AMSA from 1989. In 2007 I returned to industry and have served as Master in the:

- Tongan flag MV HAKULA (ex-MV SANDRA MARIE 5,000t deadweight geared bulk-carrier – January 2007),
- Australian flag MV GOLIATH (15,500t deadweight cement carrier – August 2007),
- Barbados flag MV CEMENTCO (15,800t deadweight geared bulk carrier – September 2007) and
- Maltese flag MV CSL ATLANTIC (23,683 deadweight self-discharging bulk carrier July – October 2010).

4. I am currently semi-retired teaching maritime studies at the Newcastle Campus of TAFE and providing maritime consultancy. Through my maritime consultancy I provide a range of services including:

- Marine survey reporting;
- Maritime training;
- Contract pilotage;
- Preparation of expert witness reports; and
- The development and delivery of Australian Maritime Safety Authority (AMSA) accredited courses for specific competencies and professional development.

5. My capacity to contribute to the Australian maritime industry was recognised in 2007 when I was invited to become an independent member of the National Maritime Safety Committee's Incident Analysis Review Panel. The Panel is charged to:

'analyse marine incident report findings from coronial inquests reports as well as from jurisdictional investigations on major marine incidents. This information represents an

*important step in getting a national picture of marine incidents and will be used to inform the development of national safety policies.*¹

6. In the course of the above I have co-authored and authored two publications. These are:
- Ship Administration with Captain Neil Bevis published by West 1 Services ISBN 0 7307 2235 X, and
 - Maritime Regulations and Legislation, MLR07, OTEN TAFE NSW.

In addition to these publications I have prepared AMSA accredited teaching notes on Electronic Chart Display Information Systems (ECDIS) and implementation of human factors.

7. I have a strong personal commitment to remaining current with all operational aspects of the maritime industry and delivery of education. I am also an active supporter of the Australian maritime industry, I have presented papers at the National Maritime Safety Committee's Conference on Certification, presented papers on 'Cargo Operations' and 'Marine Pilot Competency – a Trainer's Perspective' through the Maritime Interest Group supported by the Maritime Law Section of the University of Newcastle as well as being an Associate Fellow of the Nautical Institute.

8. In 2013 I returned to the RAN as a contract project officer and Navy Harbour Master - Sydney. In mid 2013 I set up the RAN's Sea Boat Employment Policy Group/Sea Boat Safety Group and chaired it until November 2014. This group was charged with setting the operational limitations for small craft operated by the RAN through the analysis of incidents and proactive hazard identification. I separated from the Permanent Force in December 2016 to return to maritime education and consultancy.

¹Chief Executive Officer of National Maritime Safety Committee letter Incident Analysis Review Panel, dated 9 February 2007