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**BOND UNIVERSITY**

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8 March 2013

The Secretary  
House of Representatives  
Standing Committee on Education and Employment  
PO Box 6021  
Parliament House  
Canberra ACT 2600

By Email: [ee.reps@aph.gov.au](mailto:ee.reps@aph.gov.au)

Dear Sir/Madam

**Re: Inquiry into Higher Education Support Proposal**  
***Higher Education Support Amendment (Asian Century) Bill 2013***

Bond University welcomes and supports the Government's efforts to expand eligibility for OS-HELP assistance and provide additional incentives for university students to undertake part of their course of study in Asia from 1 January 2014.

Bond University supports student exchange through an active program featuring partnerships with 62 universities in 22 countries. We have long been committed to providing our students with international experiences and opportunities for developing Asia-literacy skills. Our graduates are well placed to help Australian businesses take full advantage of global opportunities in the Asian Century.

As a not-for-profit, private university Bond delivers high-quality graduates into the Australian workforce who have not received any benefit from the Commonwealth Grants Scheme tuition subsidy. Under the current and proposed HESA arrangements, they will also be excluded from the same incentive and support for Asian studies that is available to their public university counterparts through the important OS-HELP scheme.

In this submission, we are requesting that the current Inquiry into the Higher Education Support Proposal consider a further expansion of eligibility for OS-HELP assistance, beyond that proposed by the current amendments, to include domestic university students that do not receive financial assistance under the Commonwealth Grant Scheme (CSP) scheme. This would ensure all domestic university students have equitable access to experience the social and academic cultures of other countries and to meet Australia's future productivity challenges.

**Background**

Bond was established 24 years ago pioneering private education in Australia with the first intake of students in 1989. We are a small university by Australian standards with approximately 4,000 students. We are a not-for-profit university which means any surplus is reinvested in the student experience including capital expenditure, IT infrastructure, scholarships and student exchange support.

Bond University receives equitable access to Federal research support through performance-driven block grant funding (JRE, RTS, RIGB and SRE<sup>1</sup>). However, we are locked out of the major teaching and learning funds and student support funding.

### **Access to Student Support Funding**

The current legislative basis for Australian Government funding of higher education is the Higher Education Support Act 2003 (HESA), which states that the objects of the Act are, inter alia, to support a higher education system that is "characterised by quality, diversity and equity of access".

Access to the OS-HELP loan scheme and additional travel assistance under new initiatives such as the AsiaBound Grant Program are only available to students with a Commonwealth Supported Place under the CGS scheme. If the objectives of the HESA Act are to be realised, access to OS-HELP assistance should be available to *all* students as recently stated in Minister for Tertiary Education, Skills, Science and Research media release Making Study in Asia More Accessible dated 14 February 2013.

Moreover, the Statement of Compatibility with Human Rights attached to the Higher Education Support Amendment (Asian Century) Bill 2013 indicates that Schedule 1 of the Bill engages the right to education contained in Article 13 of the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights. The covenant recognises that higher education shall be equally accessible to all. By excluding some students from OS-HELP, the HESA Act and Asian Amendments Bill cannot be said to be compatible with the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights.

Bond has an active student exchange program featuring partnerships with 62 leading universities in 22 countries. Students enrolled in undergraduate and postgraduate programs at Bond University have the opportunity to diversify their academic and cultural experiences by participating in an exchange program. The OS-HELP loan scheme however, is only offered to students on CSPs therefore Bond University students are ineligible to receive this help even though the University makes a significant contribution to building connections and partnerships that broaden the students experience across the globe. We fully expect that more Bond students would go on exchange if this help was available.

Yours sincerely

**Professor Tim Brailsford**  
**Vice-Chancellor and President**

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<sup>1</sup> JRE; Joint Research Engagement; RTS Research Training Scheme; RIGB: Research Infrastructure Block Grant; SRE: Sustainable Research Excellence