

19 September 2012

Ms Amanda Rishworth

Chair, Standing Committee on Education and Employment
P.O. Box 6021
Parliament House
Canberra ACT 2600
ee.reps@aph.gov.au

Dear Ms Rishworth,

Higher Education Support Amendment (Maximum Payment Amounts and Other Measures) Bill 2012.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide the *House of Representatives Standing Committee on Education and Employment* with the opportunity to comment on the proposed amendments to the Higher Education Support Act 2003.

Overall we support the bill and its proposed amendments to the Act. In particular we endorse the proposed sharing of data with other providers who have a legitimate requirement to access this information.

Updating the maximum payment amounts for Other Grants and Commonwealth scholarships and allowing the Minister to determine the maximum payment amounts by legislative instrument rather than recurrent amendments to the Act, is a more efficient approach to updating amounts which the IRU supports.

In particular we strongly endorse the proposed amendment to allow the Department to disclose personal information to other regulatory bodies who have a legitimate demand for unit record level data. For example TEQSA requires this information for risk assessment. Allowing DIISRTE to share this data streamlines the process and reduces the administrative burden on providers.

We also note it is proposed that third party service providers conducting surveys to measure the quality of teaching and learning will be provided with personal information for sampling purposes and that the bill includes strong provisions to ensure information is not misused or released publicly, with all recipients of personal information being bound by the Information Privacy Principles in the Privacy Act. As an extra safeguard we acknowledge that higher education providers will need to provide consent to these other parties.

The IRU endorses the proposed amendments to the Act, in the interests of administrative efficiency and to ensure Australia's tertiary education system is effectively quality assured.

Yours sincerely

Professor Barney Glover
Acting Chair, IRU
Vice-Chancellor Charles Darwin University