

TERMS OF REFERENCE

On the 12 October 2000 the Senate resolved that the following matter be referred to the Employment, Workplace Relations, Small Business and Education References Committee for inquiry and report by the first sitting day in August 2001:

The capacity of public universities to meet Australia's higher education needs, with particular reference to:

- (a) the adequacy of current funding arrangements with respect to:
 - (i) the capacity of universities to manage and serve increasing demand,
 - (ii) institutional autonomy and flexibility, and
 - (iii) the quality and diversity of teaching and research;
- (b) the effect of increasing reliance on private funding and market behaviour on the sector's ability to meet Australia's education, training and research needs, including its effect on:
 - (i) the quality and diversity of education,
 - (ii) the production of sufficient numbers of appropriately-qualified graduates to meet industry demand,
 - (iii) the adequacy of campus infrastructure and resources,
 - (iv) the maintenance and extension of Australia's long-term capacity in both basic and applied research across the diversity of fields of knowledge, and
 - (v) the operations and effect of universities' commercialised research and development structures;
- (c) the public liability consequences of private, commercial activities of universities;
- (d) the equality of opportunity to participate in higher education, including:
 - (i) the levels of access among social groups under-represented in higher education,
 - (ii) the effects of the introduction of differential Higher Education Contribution Schemes and other fees and charges and changes in funding provision on the affordability and accessibility of higher education,

- (iii) the adequacy of current student income support measures, and
 - (iv) the growth rates in participation by level of course and field of study relative to comparable nations;
- (e) the factors affecting the ability of Australian public universities to attract and retain staff in the context of competitive local and global markets and the intellectual culture of universities;
- (f) the capacity of public universities to contribute to economic growth:
 - (i) in communities and regions,
 - (ii) as an export industry, and
 - (iii) through research and development, both via the immediate economic contribution of universities and through sustaining national research capacity in the longer term;
- (g) the regulation of the higher education sector in the global environment, including:
 - (i) accreditation regimes and quality assurance,
 - (ii) external mechanisms to undertake ongoing review of the capacity of the sector to meet Australia's education, training, research, social and economic needs, and
 - (iii) university governance reporting requirements, structures and practices; and
- (h) the nature and sufficiency of independent advice to government on higher education matters, particularly having regard to the abolition of the National Board of Employment, Education and Training.

Question put and passed.

[Journals of the Senate 12/10/00]