

## CHAPTER 9

### STAFFING OF PUBLIC UNIVERSITIES

When you factor [pressure on academics to participate in soft marking and deteriorating standards] into other disincentives such as the low salary; the lack of tenure; the sliding dollar; the dreadful morale, the self-defeating politics of the average university department; and the market imperatives of corporatisation within public universities, why would any sensible, qualified, capable or independent-minded person want to pursue an academic career?<sup>1</sup>

#### Current staffing levels

9.1 The effects of cuts in higher education may be seen most clearly by considering impacts on staff student ratios. The table below shows changes in the number of university staff for the period from 1990 to 1999, a period in which the total number of students increased by around 70 per cent. The number of international students quadrupled and the number of higher degree students tripled. In general, the staff requirements for providing adequate teaching to international and higher degree students are greater than for domestic undergraduates, so it is reasonable to conclude that the total teaching load has approximately doubled.<sup>2</sup>

Table 1: Staff at Australian Universities

Year	Academic	Other	Full Time	Fractional	Total
1990	34,184	33,117	56,970	10,331	67,301
1991	35,848	35,279	60,223	10,904	71,127
1992	34,500	39,455	62,299	11,656	73,955
1993	35,272	40,307	63,624	11,955	75,579
1994	35,662	40,423	63,963	12,122	76,085
1995	36,235	41,195	64,762	12,668	77,430
1996	36,542	42,224	65,625	13,141	78,766
1997	35,953	41,363	63,267	14,049	77,316
1998	35,057	41,215	61,618	14,654	76,272
1999	34,926	41,114	61,561	14,479	76,040

Source: DETYA Selected Higher Education Statistics

1 Submission 96, Dr Michael Giffin, p 5

2 Submission 49, Professor John Quiggin, p.6

9.2 As can be seen from the table, the total number of academic staff was effectively static during this period, but there was a large increase in the proportion of part-time staff, most of whom are more likely to be academic rather than administrative staff. Thus, an effective doubling of workload was combined with a reduction in the number of full-time staff. Noteworthy also is the increase in general staff, although the Committee understands from many submissions that this increase has been to the advantage of university central administrations.

9.3 The Committee takes the view that staff 'rationalisations', accompanied by greatly increased enrolments over the period has resulted in a decline in the quality of education. This has occurred at a time when the proportion of university costs met by the Commonwealth has declined, from around 85 per cent to less than 55 per cent. Further cuts in the net Commonwealth contribution may be anticipated as the effects of changes in the HECS scheme work through the system. The net result is that Commonwealth expenditure on higher education, expressed in 1989-90 prices, has fallen from a peak of just over \$3 billion in 1994-95 back to the 1989-90 level of \$2.5 billion. Expressed as a proportion of GDP, Commonwealth higher education funding has fallen steadily from approximately 0.6 per cent to approximately 0.4 per cent, at a time when the need for expenditure has increased substantially.

### **General comments on current working conditions**

9.4 A bleak picture emerges from the Committee's consideration of university staffing issues. Along with the kinds of course rationalisations described in Chapter 5 have come increased class sizes and therefore increased workloads for academic staff. The staff-student ratios are considerably worse, on average, than they were six years ago, and academics have assumed the burden of a large increase in administration as a result of altered regulatory processes.

9.5 On the issue of increased workloads, an NTEU survey found that 83 per cent of academics and 77 per cent of general staff reported increased workloads since 1996. Forty per cent of academics surveyed in the McInnis report, cited elsewhere in this chapter, claimed to be working more than 50 hours per week. One result of this has been that academic staff are no longer able to keep up with developments in their field of interest because the teaching and administration workloads are too heavy. Many of them believe that their teaching is suffering because they are not reading sufficiently widely to establish the relevance and currency of their disciplines in terms of today's society.<sup>3</sup>

9.6 As teaching loads have increased so has the burden of dealing with what have been described as endless measures of accountability, and highly intrusive audit processes, including surveys of student satisfaction and research collection exercises.<sup>4</sup> These are applied to academic practice in order that institutions can assure themselves

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3 Submission 58, Dr Myra Dunn, p.1

4 See, for instance, Associate Professor David Tripp, *Hansard*, Perth. 2 July 2001, p.674

and government that they are responsive to student needs and demands and have actually produced the research they claim. If universities ever conducted surveys of staff satisfaction they would reveal that morale is generally very low, and this is to the detriment of the quality of both teaching and research. Australian universities are now quite stressful environments in which to work and the level of frustration and even despair among people with robust tolerance levels to these feelings is high.<sup>5</sup>

9.7 One academic has described the changes that are pressing on academics:

Teaching on-line has entailed learning many new technological skills, all of which have increased the time I spend teaching and interacting with students in addition to the traditional ways of teaching. In the past I was able to interact much more effectively with students because tutorial groups consisted of 15 people. Now the kind of work I do with students is severely restricted by tutorial groups of 25 and more. The rooms provided for tutorial groups no longer hold the number of students in a tutorial group. I have been forced outside on the lawn because a room was not big enough. I have been forced to confine students to 4 hours of consultation (one-to-one advising) a week because of teaching/admin commitments, thus severely restricting the access to me which I think my 200+ students have a right to.<sup>6</sup>

9.8 An academic from Sydney University has listed in her submission commonplace phenomena observable in any week during term as: overcrowding of classrooms and lecture theatres; long queues waiting outdoors in all weathers to enrol, because rationalisation of general staff had led to diminished resources in faculty offices; and queues of students waiting to submit assignments in departments, time consuming because of cut-backs to general staff.

9.9 The result of this increased workload, and of the tensions resulting from contact with larger classes has been an increase in stress levels. An NTEU survey found that more than half of the academics questioned found that their jobs were routinely stressful, with women suffering more than men. Current research is indicating that there is an alarmingly high proportion of academic and general staff experiencing work-related stress at levels that are threatening their health.<sup>7</sup> The Committee believes that a great deal of this stress results from pressure on academics to engage in commercial activities upon which their work increasingly depends, and for which they may have had little training or little aptitude for. Elsewhere in this chapter there is reference to the stressful administration required to maintain a pool of part-time or casual tutors and lecturers who teach a large proportion of class time. Staff administration is made far more difficult as a result.

9.10 The staff cuts have had their most severe impact on the running of tutorials. Many departments have been forced to cancel small group teaching because they have

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5 Submission 106, Professor Margaret Clunies Ross, p.2

6 Submission 58, Dr Myra Dunn, p.1

7 Submission 283, National Tertiary Education Union, p.37

lost so many academic staff members and no longer have any part-time teaching money to employ casual staff to take tutorials. When tutorials are run they may include up to 30 students, and for this reason may be referred to as seminars rather than tutorials. 'Tutorial' work in the way it was understood twenty years ago is in any case almost impossible with as many as 30 students because tutors cannot attend properly to the individual needs of students.

9.11 The considerable increase in teaching loads and the various administrative and reporting tasks that are now routine results in there being less time for individual members of the academic staff to carry out their research. For academics in the Humanities, time is the most valuable commodity in the pursuit of research, as most Humanities research is still typically carried out by a single researcher and the outcome is a single-authored publication. However, whether one works in a team or as an individual, time and freedom from distraction are crucial to both quality and quantity of research output and these entities are in diminishing supply at present.<sup>8</sup>

9.12 The Committee is concerned about the incidence of overwork among academics and their loss of enthusiasm for both their discipline and their teaching. One academic from the University of Tasmania apologised for the 'somewhat emotional tone' of his brief submission, but it provided an insight to the Committee into the pressures upon academics today:

Like most academics, I entered academic life not because of the salary or the conditions it offered, but simply because of my own passion for the discipline in which I work. In other words, I entered on an academic career because of a commitment to intellectual work as such, and to the research and teaching that is part of that. I now find myself in a system that not only cannot satisfy or support my passion for the discipline of philosophy, but that cannot even support and does not value the intellectual work to which I have always been committed. I am Head of a School that is not even properly funded for its day to day operation – and this in spite of the fact that by all the measures available we are one of the most successful Schools of Philosophy in the country. I spend most of my available time working at administrative tasks relating to accountability and quality assurance measures, financial administration and other matters that have little real connection with research and teaching. The only time I have for my own research – and my appointment as Professor at the University of Tasmania was supposed to be in large part to provide leadership in research – is in the evenings and weekends. My family complain that I work too much (most academics of whatever rank currently work 50-60 hour weeks and my wife insists that I work at least that and usually until midnight most evenings) and that I never have time for holidays (few academics actually take the leave to which they are entitled). But I have no other choice if I am to do the things that matter to me and to my job. I know personally of a number of staff at my current university whose health has been directly and adversely affected by the workloads they are required to carry. My predecessor in the

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8 Submission 106, Professor Margaret Clunies Ross, p. 2-3

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chair of Philosophy at the University of Tasmania resigned the position in part because of concerns about his own health – in his own words, he felt the job would kill him.<sup>9</sup>

9.13 While the Committee is in no position to judge whether or not this experience of increased workload is of the same magnitude for most academics, or if this reaction to it is commonplace, but a large number of submissions do echo these sentiments. The Committee also assumes that a great many academics under strain did not write a submission, often because they did not have the time to do so, as a number of informal conversations have indicated.

9.14 One vice-chancellor submitted that it was remarkable that staff at his university not only met the demands of the worsening student–staff ratio, but they had managed to sustain it with ‘admirably little diminution in the quality of the learning environment’, but that it was becoming obvious that they could not continue to work the unsustainably long hours.<sup>10</sup> The Committee heard similar views expressed all over the country. It notes the research done by Dr Craig McInnis on the work role of academics, and the comment made at the beginning of this study that the attitudes of academics are often puzzling to outsiders.

One feature of academics’ work which sets them apart from other professional workers is the level of satisfaction they get from the work itself and the degree of choice they traditionally had over their work agenda. Few occupations allow for workers to largely follow their interests regardless of whether or not it is of immediate or obvious benefit to the organisation. Academics have been happy to trade off less than adequate work conditions and career benefits for the opportunity to pursue matters they personally define as worthy of investigation.<sup>11</sup>

9.15 Research undertaken recently by McInnis points to a dramatic decline in work satisfaction experienced by academics since 1993. This is mainly the result of declining salaries and other benefits. However, there are more fundamental problems emerging which affect work satisfaction levels. As McInnis states:

...embedded within the relevant attitudinal scale is a major decline in a primary source of intrinsic satisfaction for academics: the opportunity to pursue their own academic interests. It is hardly surprising that academics faced with a seriously low level of satisfaction with salary and related benefits – especially a loss in sense of job security – combined with a perception of less control over their work agendas are increasingly negative in outlook. The possibility of trading off poor work conditions against the

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9 Submission 25, Professor Jeff Malpas

10 Submission 184, Professor Bernard Moulden, p.2

11 Dr Craig McInnis, *The Work Roles of Academics in Australian Universities*, DETYA, June 1999, p.5

intrinsic rewards of academic work is much less of an option for an increasing number.<sup>12</sup>

9.16 The Committee believes that the quality of education will deteriorate if academics continue to find that their enthusiasm for their vocation is stifled by an excessive administrative burden and unmanageably large numbers of students. It makes the point that the conditions that might be acceptable for a 'training' task, are not acceptable for the task of providing an 'education'. Training outcomes are easier to list, to measure and to assess than are educational outcomes, which require a large measure of freedom and interaction.<sup>13</sup> The interactivity and freedom which are characteristic of collegial models of decision making are less easily attained in universities under such severe staffing pressure.

### **Recruitment and retention of staff**

9.17 Recruitment and retention of staff remains a worrying challenge to universities. It is an issue which is mainly tied to the question of salaries. Universities are finding it increasingly difficult to attract and retain excellent teaching staff in a number of key areas. Among these are engineering, accountancy, pharmacy and information technology. The reason is that the salaries paid to university staff do not compare with those offered outside in these key areas of high employment demand. Only altruism and enjoyment of academic life hold these valuable people in positions that are well below their earning potential. As the McInnis research indicates, levels of work satisfaction remain surprisingly high despite increased work pressures and declining salary relativities, but it is worthy of note that satisfaction levels are well below those in Britain and the United States.

9.18 Just over half of Australian academics surveyed in 1999 stated that they would choose an academic career again, given the choice. This compares with nearly one third in Britain and over three quarters in the United States. Younger academics are more optimistic about their future, but the problem remains for Australian universities to maintain recruitment of quality staff. An NTEU-CAPA survey found that while a majority of research students aspired to an academic career, nearly half rated their chances of success as poor or very poor. Less than a quarter described their chances as good or very good. Those surveyed referred to the difficulties of 'getting a foot in the door', or believed that there were insufficient jobs in their discipline.<sup>14</sup>

9.19 A number of submissions referred to the problem of university staff recruitment in relation to professional training. The plight of law schools was emphasised to the Committee in view of the very high salaries that are now commanded by law graduates on the international market. The Council of Australian Law Deans reminded the Committee that the salaries of law professors were once

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12 *ibid.*, p.57

13 Submission 88, Professor Campbell Macknight, p.7

14 Submission 283, National Tertiary Education Union, p.38

pegged to that of supreme court judges. Now, a supreme court judge earns more than twice as much as a professor, as does a federal magistrate. First year graduates sometimes earn more than associate lecturers.<sup>15</sup> The Committee shares the Law Deans concerns that massive income differentials may have the effect of driving out of universities and into private practice academically gifted people, the loss of whose contribution to legal education would be damaging to the long term future of the profession.

9.20 The University of Western Australia has identified the recruitment and retention of staff as its single most important operational objective, although it admits it cannot pay competitive salaries.<sup>16</sup> Despite this admission, the Committee notes that the salary levels at UWA are probably the highest in the country, as can be seen from the table on page 15. Griffith University has argued that the only practical source of relief for this problem is more adequate salary supplementation from the Commonwealth,<sup>17</sup> requiring a marked shift in government policy.

9.21 New universities, in contrast to UWA, having no accumulation of endowments, are most disadvantaged in their ability to offer attractive salaries and conditions of employment. Victoria University has been able to fund modest salary increases only by cutting staff numbers. The University has stated that without Commonwealth salary supplements staff cannot even be attracted to areas of high demand, such as in information and computing technologies. The VU submission continues:

One important source of staff is the recruitment of people at junior levels or from outside traditional academic areas providing them with professional development and research training. The Commonwealth's major cut to research training places reduces these opportunities considerably, with medium term but deep consequences for staff recruitment, invigoration, morale and ultimately the quality of teaching and research.<sup>18</sup>

9.22 Staff shortages always affect the range of courses on offer. A former student at Swinburne University explained how he saw staffing difficulties over recent years:

When I was an undergraduate student there was always a handful of academics capable of teaching any given subject such that the absence of the regular lecturer did not inhibit the teaching of his or her subject. Now at this same university, that I studied at, if any academic is absent it can be expected that two or more subjects will not be taught for the duration of the academic's absence because there is no other staff capable of filling in. This, I am lead to believe, is a result of staff number cutbacks which are a result

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15 Submission 284, Council of Australian Law Deans, p.6

16 Submission 134, University of Western Australia, p.6

17 Submission 63, Griffith University, p.10

18 Submission 234, Victoria University, p.5

of funding cutbacks. Considering that the students have lost this part of their education it can be concluded that current funding is far from sufficient.<sup>19</sup>

9.23 There is much concern about the capacity of universities to recruit staff who will be expected to carry academic programs through the next decade and beyond. The career structure offered by universities has been limited by tenured appointments made twenty or more years ago, and with new appointments limited by funding stringencies. An academic career is still sought by many postgraduate students but there are depressingly few permanent positions offered. As one submission noted, a Ph.D candidate who has hopes of an academic career now finds that at the end of four years of study the chances of a contract position are slim.<sup>20</sup> This concern may not be an issue for long, however, as demographic influence come into play, resulting in the quite different problem of having inexperienced academics filling vacancies as high level academics retire over the next five years.

9.24 In regard to this, the Committee was also told that many of the best scholars and teachers in universities under the age of 40 are being or have been lost to Australia. In the next five years, many staff currently in the system will reach retirement age. A crisis is looming, particularly but not exclusively in the Humanities, because there are many fewer staff currently in the age range 40-55 and even fewer under 40. The most urgent need in this area is for sufficient funds to enable institutions to replace academic staff at the junior level and, at the senior level, to appoint academic leaders to chairs and other senior posts that have often been frozen for some years in order to save money.<sup>21</sup>

9.25 The Committee believes that public confidence in universities will be eroded when it becomes evident that they are not properly staffed and when it is obvious that academics now approaching retirement cannot be replaced – even assuming that funds are available – with appropriately qualified and experienced younger academics. Career academics nurtured in a scholarly tradition over a period of years, and in a culture that supports their scholastic ambitions, are an indispensable resource. If their numbers are allowed to run down to a point where the quality of academic programs cannot be resuscitated, the loss would be tragic. The Committee notes the submission from the University of New South Wales that states that financial pressures on the university have built up to a point where high workloads and low morale are denying to Australia the full potential of a quality system. If this is not changed – and changed quickly – the damage to universities will become embedded and will take decades to repair.<sup>22</sup> One academic summed up the implications of the failure to address staffing problems in this way:

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19 Submission 251, Mr Clint Steele, p.1

20 Submission 289, Ms Diane Westerhuis, p.1

21 Submission 106, Professor Margaret Clunies-Ross, p.3

22 Submission 263, University of New South Wales, p.3



This is an effect of a system that is dying, root and branch, and until there is a major injection of government money into the basic operating grant to reduce teaching loads, to pay proper salaries, and to arrest the decline in infrastructure, the situation will only get worse. The capacity of Australia's public universities to meet the needs of the future is negligible: they were not even able meet the needs of the recent past.<sup>23</sup>

9.26 In considering this statement, the Committee is mindful of the advice from the Chair of the Australian Vice-Chancellors' Committee stating that the universities are in 'crisis'. It does not therefore regard Professor Turner's statement as being in any way hyperbolic.

### **Management pressures**

9.27 In Chapter 4 of this report, the Committee addresses the issue of governance and discusses the implication of this for relationships between academics and administrators. Matters raised here will cover some of that ground again. Many submissions refer to the divide that has opened up between the two cultures: professional administrators and re-oriented academics running the enterprise university, and more traditional academics trying to retain an element of collegial management in determining university policy.

9.28 Research undertaken by McInnis points to tensions existing between academics and university administrators. In many respects this represents a clash of cultures, with each group perceiving its relationship with the university in a different way. McInnis found that morale among administrators to be noticeably higher than among academics. It is obvious that academics understand the potential for administrative staff influence over curriculum selection and delivery and on research agendas. McInnis believes we are seeing the emergence of a new class of administrators who are making strong claims for recognition as legitimate partners in the strategic management of universities.<sup>24</sup>

9.29 The Committee received a large number of submissions on the theme of 'culture clash' as identified in McInnis. For instance, one academic referred to the difficulties of dealing with:

the ever expanding and self-sustaining bureaucracy which, far from supporting the academic functions of the university, divert the attention of academic staff to countless futile forms and submissions, supposedly in the interests of cost-cutting and accountability, which result in wastage of valuable human resources needed for teaching and research.<sup>25</sup>

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23 Submission 26, op. cit., p.4

24 Dr Craig McInnis, 'Academics and Professional Administrators in Australian Universities: dissolving boundaries and new tensions', *Journal of Higher Education Policy and Management*, vol 20, no 2, 1998, p.170

25 Submission 182, Professor Michael Clyne

9.30 Other instances of frustration about management are cited in Chapter 4.

9.31 While these sentiments about frustrations with management are expressed in robust terms, they are nonetheless commonplace opinions. University administrators may be unpopular in some quarters because of a perception that they are creating a new administrative order rather than simply responding to DETYA requirements and university program demands. The Committee did not receive any submissions from individual university administrators, and the tone of the submission from the Association for Tertiary Education Management (ATEM) was most circumspect. It noted that the culture clash identified by McInnis does not allow universities to respond as they should to the challenges facing higher education, and that universities risk being undermined by this divide. The ATEM is concerned about the need to recruit and retain administrative staff who understand ‘the unique academic nature of universities’.<sup>26</sup>

9.32 Allan Patience has argued that good teaching and good research are creatively interwoven with conscientious administration. The first step to achieving this is to increase the representation levels of staff and students on university councils.<sup>27</sup>

### **Academic freedom**

9.33 The changing administrative culture of universities has seen governance and management shift from one based on a collegial model to one based on an enterprise or corporate model. An attitudinal change which has accompanied the new managerial culture appears to be a declining respect for the ideal of academic freedom. Academic freedom has formerly been an issue when academics have been accused of offending against public morality or decency, or in the promotion of unorthodox or unpopular opinions. It has therefore always been an issue of concern. Macintyre and Marginson list the various disputes, dismissals and controversies involving academics through the twentieth century in order to demonstrate that academics and universities have always been fair game when the mood of the community demands action be taken. In nearly all cases the universities have failed to back their own.<sup>28</sup> Yet many in society have argued for free-thought on the basis that intellectual freedom is an essential element of good scholarship. Academics therefore needed to be protected against philistines and guardians of public morality in the interests of social progress and intellectual development. As well as applying to individuals, academic freedom also has meaning in a collegial and in an institutional sense. Universities are autonomous, and placing

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26 Submission 42, Association for Tertiary Education Management, p.2

27 Professor Allan Patience, ‘Silencing the Academy? Reflecting on a dispute in a corporatising university’, *Australian University Review*, No2, 1999, p.70

28 Stuart MacIntyre and Simon Marginson, ‘The University and its Public’ in, Tony Coady (ed) *Why Universities Matter*, Sydney 2000, pp.58-59

limits on their capacity to set their own priorities for teaching or research, can serve to place overt or subtle pressure downwards on individual researchers or teachers.<sup>29</sup>

9.34 In a recent survey of academic opinion, the Australia Institute found that academics rated freedoms to research, to publish and to teach as highly important. There was a high level of agreement that academic freedom was matched by academic responsibility, with this being defined as an ethical obligation to students, peers and the wider community. The same high percentage of academics surveyed by the Australia Institute indicated at least a degree of concern about the state of academic freedom, with over 50 per cent being concerned 'to a minor extent' and just under 40 per cent being concerned 'to a major extent'.<sup>30</sup>

9.35 The advent of the enterprise university, which places less emphasis (so it is argued) on intellectual values has meant that dissident academics feel more threatened now from within the halls of *academe* than from without. Just over 80 per cent of academics surveyed by the Australia Institute drew a connection between increased commercialisation of their university and perceptions of a decline in academic freedom.<sup>31</sup> There is also irony in the fact that academics in trouble with their universities are able to find support, and thereby a measure of protection, from champions of academic freedom outside the universities, in places like the press and parliament; traditional foes of dissident academics.

9.36 The Committee received submissions describing a number of clashes between university management and dissident academics. A number of these cases also received considerable press coverage. The first case, which became a matter for press reports in Melbourne concerned the objection raised by Professor Allan Patience of Victoria University to the University's leasing of a 'corporate box' at the Docklands Stadium at a cost in excess of \$100 000 per annum. This objection was made while Professor Patience was a member of the university council, and was conveyed to colleagues by e-mail. The Vice-Chancellor objected to the 'undergraduate tone' of the e-mail and cancelled Professor Patience's access to this facility, along with two other academics. He was also threatened with defamation action. As is customary for vice-chancellors, this action was informed by legal advice. The Committee assumes that legal advice is readily available to justify virtually any administrative action by a vice-chancellor, and will hold up until such time as it comes before a court. Patience has described the position he was placed in following the threat of defamation:

Senior management subsequently requested that I sign a prepared written guarantee that I would abide by the regulations governing the university's IT facility. I declined to do so and protested my innocence when senior managers (and the chancellor) accused me of breaching them. I was at no

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29 Carole Kayrooz, Pamela Kinnear and Paul Preston, *Academic Freedom and the Commercialisation of Australian Universities*, The Australia Institute, Discussion Paper No 37, March 2001, p.4

30 *ibid.*, p.23

31 *ibid.*, p.28

stage given an opportunity to answer the charges, nor was I allowed access to due process or to legal advice from the relevant university authorities. After some weeks of e-mail blackout I was reconnected. Senior management announced that a committee would be set up to revise e-mail regulations and dispute procedures.<sup>32</sup>

9.37 At its Melbourne hearings, the Committee heard the Deputy Vice-Chancellor of Victoria University put the view that the main concern of the University was that Professor Patience's e-mail contained material considered to be defamatory. He denied that the university had a policy of endeavouring to prevent employees from criticising the university.<sup>33</sup>

9.38 The NTEU has listed other instances of violation of academic freedom in other universities. The first is the case of La Trobe University entering into a research contract that sought to prevent other academic staff –including those not party to the contract – from undertaking research that might be in competition. Another was the case of a distinguished scholar and emeritus professor at Monash University who spoke at an NTEU rally against cuts to the Arts Faculty budget and subsequently had his access to university facilities cut off. These were restored after a public outcry.<sup>34</sup> Claims of violations of academic freedom in regard to the Steele case at the University of Wollongong and the Battin case at New England University are described elsewhere in this report.

9.39 The Committee has heard evidence of the high levels of loyalty that exist among academics toward their universities. There is an understandable reluctance to bring public attention to the failings of their university. When that happens:

What we see is that their academic credentials then come under attack: there are whispering campaigns that they are not really very good and do not have much of a future in the discipline...the sacking of Ted Steele sent an extremely powerful message to all academics throughout Australia: if you are going to blow the whistle, there is a good chance that you will lose your job.

There is a famous phrase, 'exit, voice and loyalty,' in response to moral dilemmas, and academics are faced with those choices. The first is to 'exit': leave the system—and we have heard of several cases ... of academics who say, 'I can tolerate it no longer, I've left the university system.' The second is 'voice': there are cases such as those of Ted Steele and the tutor at Curtin University of Technology, who speak out in public and suffer the consequences...The third choice is 'loyalty': stick to the institution and

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32 Professor Allan Patience, 'Silencing the Academy? Reflecting on a dispute in a corporatising university', *Australian University Review*, No2,1999, p.69

33 Professor Jim Falk, *Hansard*, Melbourne, 14 May 2001, p.348-349.

34 Submission 283, NTEU, p.22

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work quietly within its boundaries and see what sort of change you can bring about.<sup>35</sup>

9.40 The Committee takes the view that universities cannot be relied on to maintain their own internal inquiries when serious issues arise which go to the core of academic freedom. As the Committee has noted elsewhere, the new managerial culture is now so entrenched that universities have an instinct to stifle uncomfortable opinions of a kind usually associated with academic institutions. They have an understandable tendency to place the value of the university's reputation before their obligation to protect the rights of its faculty members to free expression. This tendency arises from a disregard for what universities should stand for. Some university administrators may have never understood this. Others may have forgotten. Recent cases have shown that there are bound to be challenges to the integrity of any inquiry process. It is for this reason that the Committee has recommended in Chapter 4 the establishment of an office for a universities ombudsman.

### **Academic salaries**

9.41 The Committee expresses its alarm at the relatively low salaries of academics. This has serious implications for the future of the higher education sector: its ability to retain good staff and thereby deliver quality education; its ability to compete on the local employment market for the graduates it produces; and its ability to attract outstanding academics from abroad. While the Committee notes the results of research which indicates that salaries are not the major determinant in job satisfaction for academics, it takes the view that the relative decline in academic salaries is a measure of the undervaluation of the place of universities in the life of the country.

9.42 The following table and graph, read together, illustrates the relative decline in academic salaries at selected universities, taking as an example a middle ranking academic. The table shows that in 1995 most universities paid salary increases at a rate that was slightly above Average Weekly Earnings (AWE). Those rates were almost identical across the system. By 2000 there were marked differences in pay rate increases evident, as illustrated by the wide gap between Newcastle University and the University of Western Australia.

9.43 The graph below shows how far university salary increases have fallen behind Average Weekly income increases since 1995, with only the University of Western Australia matching AWE levels by 2000.

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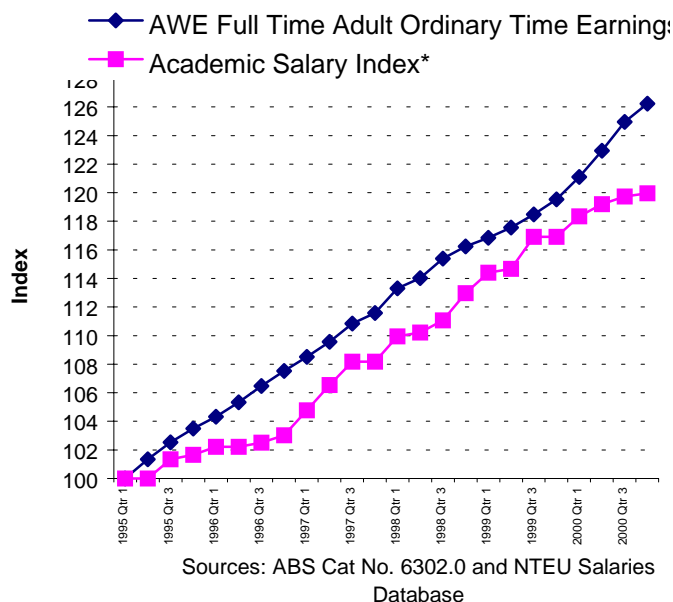
35 Dr Clive Hamilton (Australia Institute), *Hansard*, Canberra, 22 June 2001, p.536

### Salary movements 1995 to 2000 – Average Weekly Earnings and Senior Lecturer

	1995 Qtr 4	1996 Qtr 4	1997 Qtr 4	1998 Qtr 4	1999 Qtr 4	2000 Qtr 4
<b>Newcastle</b>	102.00	102.00	106.08	109.29	113.66	116.50
<b>Monash</b>	102.00	102.00	108.12	112.44	114.69	116.99
<b>RMIT</b>	102.00	102.00	107.10	109.78	114.17	117.02
<b>ANU</b>	102.00	106.90	110.14	111.57	114.91	117.21
<b>VUT</b>	102.00	102.00	108.12	114.71	114.71	119.30
<b>QUT</b>	100.00	108.12	108.12	113.59	116.43	119.64
	102.00	103.33	109.53	114.53	117.39	120.32
<b>Griffith</b>	100.00	102.00	108.12	113.59	115.86	120.54
<b>UWA</b>	102.00	102.00	107.10	113.62	118.22	120.59
<b>Macquarie</b>	102.00	102.00	107.10	112.24	117.29	120.81
<b>UNSW</b>	102.00	102.00	109.26	115.35	117.66	121.21
<b>Sydney</b>	102.00	102.00	109.26	114.79	117.09	121.77
<b>AWE</b>	103.50	107.53	111.58	116.24	119.53	126.23

Source: ABS/NTEU

### Movements in Average Weekly Earnings and Academic Salaries 1995-2000



The Academic Salary Index is an unweighted average of movements in the Senior Lecturer salary rates (Level C.1) at ANU, Sydney, UNSW, Macquarie, Newcastle, Griffith, QUT, UQ, VUT, RMIT, Monash and UWA.

9.44 Academic pay rates have been severely affected by the Government's refusal to provide any supplementation for salary increases since 1996. As explained below, the operation of enterprise bargaining, with salary increases entirely reliant upon 'efficiency' savings, is affecting the capacity of universities to attract quality staff by paying them competitive salaries. The main impetus for the attempts made by universities to generate external income results from their consciousness of the need to make salaries more attractive.<sup>36</sup>

9.45 The Committee notes the growing incidence of academic work that is being carried out in an honorary capacity. This arises not from altruism but from necessity, as clinical departments, in some cases, lack the funds to remunerate visiting specialists. The Sydney University school of dentistry, for instance, wrote to its part-time visiting teachers to ask them to continue teaching without remuneration. There are some 130 honorary faculty members of the school of dentistry. In the school of public health at Sydney tutors in the graduate medical program were also asked to apply for positions without benefit of remuneration.<sup>37</sup> The Committee views this state of affairs as a clear indication of the poverty of the university system and a mark of its decline in the estimation of the government.

### **Impact of enterprise bargaining**

9.46 The NTEU submission pointed to unfunded enterprise bargaining as exacerbating resource shortfalls and increasing pressure for the privatisation of public universities. The only way that universities can afford increased salaries is through the generation of external income. In 1994 when enterprise-based salary bargaining was introduced, it represented a change from centrally negotiated salaries funded by the Commonwealth, to salaries and conditions negotiated locally, based on awards set by the Australian Industrial Relations Commission. In the first round of enterprise bargaining the Commonwealth provided just over half of the funding for the 4.9 per cent increase, but since 1996 the Coalition Government has not supported salary increases in excess of the Cost Adjustment Factor, and making it clear to universities that they will need to fund salary increases from other revenue sources.<sup>38</sup>

9.47 The Committee takes the view that enterprise bargaining is a process which has been much more focussed on saving money than achieving genuine improvements to working conditions. It is a process that has pitched university managers against academic and general staff, with the only way out of the impasse being a reluctant concession of salary increases at the expense of retrenchments. The ideological goal of 'squeezing' efficiencies out of the system is achieved at the cost of quality of education. 'Efficiency' and quality do not always find an complementary relationship. Quality always comes at a cost, and in higher education that cost is unavoidable.

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36 Submission 283, NTEU, p.11

37 *Sydney Morning Herald*, 17 May 2001

38 Submission 283, NTEU, p.11

9.48 The Queensland division of the NTEU argued in its submission that enterprise bargaining was corroding the principles of collegiality and integrity. It also appears to have provided a rationale in which some university managements believe it is legitimate deliberately to mislead staff. This has been apparent in the aggressive bargaining tactics, including ballots for non-union agreements; an emphasis on 'corporate communications' including direct mail to staff from vice-chancellors, and attempts to limit access of unions to e-mail; mendacity and disinformation about financial matters; and a general decline in civility and integrity. Such occurrence have not been noted in all universities and cooperative attitudes have been maintained in most universities but these undesirable trends are increasing.<sup>39</sup>

9.49 An instance of a decline in the relationship between staff and management was brought to the Committee's attention in the case of the enterprise bargaining negotiations at the University of New England. A witness before the Committee had been a member of the NTEU bargaining team over the 22 months it had taken the union to negotiate an enterprise agreement, finally agreed to in June 2001. The academic stated that he had been forced to take legal action in the Federal Court as a result of his appointment as Acting Head of School being blocked by the Vice-Chancellor. The Vice-Chancellor's action was alleged to be the result of her disapproval of the academic's activism as a member of the NTEU negotiating team. A settlement was reached in this case.<sup>40</sup>

9.50 The Committee considers that the issue of academic salaries is too important to be left to enterprise agreements alone. There is ample evidence that, in general, universities are hard pressed to afford justifiable salary increases, a point conceded by Minister Kemp in his leaked cabinet memo and published as an appendix to this report. The Minister argued that salary increases were warranted, and proposed to offer universities \$259 million over three years for salary increases, contingent on their agreement to the Government's workplace relations agenda. According to the NTEU, university managers and unions alike have been frustrated by funding conditions that restrict flexibility in the bargaining process. These include conditions which are against the interests of quality, such as the abolition of merit-based promotion.

9.51 The Committee supports the restoration of some measure of supplementation to universities to allow a phased salary increase to academics that will restore a reasonable degree of parity with academic salaries in other OECD countries.

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39 Submission 62, NTEU Queensland Division, p.3

40 Submission 356, Dr Tim Batten, p.3



### **Recommendation Thirty-Five**

**The Committee calls on the Government to acknowledge that Australia is facing a loss of experienced academics as a result of comparatively poor salary rates in Australia and recommends that the Government increase public investment in higher education to enable an increase in salary levels.**

#### **Casualisation of the workforce**

9.52 The Committee notes the rapid increase in the proportion of casual and part-time academic staff in recent years. The proportion of full-time staff has fallen from 83 per cent in 1988 to 76 per cent in 1998. Some part-time academics and research assistants are employed in teaching undergraduates. These figures may not appear to be very significant, but they do not accurately represent the proportion of contact hours which are taken by casual staff. A casual FTE staff member teaches around two and a half times the face to face hours taught by a full-time academic staff member. The consequence is that while less than one quarter of the academic workforce is casual, they are teaching roughly two and a half times that amount of the face to face contact: around 37 per cent of class time in fact. So, a typical undergraduate will be taught by a casual staff member not for two hours out of ten, but for about four hours out of ten.<sup>41</sup>

9.53 The use of casual staff is necessary to fill temporary vacancies that arise from the release of tenured staff for various purposes, including research and administrative duties. Time release is regularly sought by those seeking research funding, and successful applicants are often replaced by casual staff, so far as their teaching duties are concerned.

9.54 Formerly, time release vacancies would be routinely filled by postgraduate students, affording them useful experience in lecturing and tutoring. This situation seems to have changed significantly. It has been put to the Committee that a lack of adequate funding to the higher education sector for both research and teaching has created the development of a secondary labour market with the use of casual, sessional and very short term contract positions. This group of employees has become responsible for a large amount of the face to face teaching delivery and some of the 'nuts and bolts' of research. Significantly, it is argued that this trend is having a substantial effect on quality and diversity, particularly of teaching. It also affects the quality of employment that can be offered, especially in non-metropolitan areas where the university is the major employer.<sup>42</sup>

9.55 In anecdotal evidence, a number of submissions allude to the increased reliance on temporary casuals as having an effect on the quality of teaching. The Sydney University SRC has claimed that the increased casualisation of academics has resulted in some lecturers being unwilling to set reasonably sized regular assessments

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41 Submission 54, Dr Linda Hort, p.4

42 *ibid.*

or supplementary examinations or examinations requiring special conditions, as in the case of students with special needs. The SRC also claims that the School of Pharmacy substituted an oral examination for the normal written examination for the supplementary examination, apparently as a consequence of having casual academics involved in teaching the course.<sup>43</sup> Qualified and experienced staff are expensive to employ, so universities are now relying on people who often lack the experience and expertise necessary to teach courses properly but who are nevertheless employed because they are less expensive to employ than full-time staff.<sup>44</sup> DETYAs own research suggests that budget pressures have encouraged universities to recruit at the lowest academic entry level, and that a high proportion are part-time and casual.<sup>45</sup>

9.56 The NTEU has stated that excessive use of casual staff in response to funding stringencies has affected the quality of education. The union has pointed out that while casual employment offers a number of advantages for postgraduate students to gain teaching experience, it does not have much to offer as a long-term employment prospect. Casual staff are disadvantaged by inadequate superannuation arrangements and have no access to paid leave and professional development. Students are also disadvantaged by excessive reliance on casual staff. Academics who are paid by the hour cannot be expected to be available for student consultation at all hours, neither can they be expected to have the same level of engagement with the department and the university as those with ongoing contracts of employment.<sup>46</sup>

9.57 The increased rate of employment of casual staff is made far worse by the additional administrative burden placed on permanent staff. As one submission noted:

In addition to not being the highly qualified staff needed in universities to maintain international standards of competence, these people do not write subjects, develop new courses, come to staff meetings, conduct research, contribute to many other committee meetings or do many other duties which full-time staff normally do. THAT work is thrown back onto fewer and fewer full-time staff and is part of the enormous increase in teaching and administration workloads. All of us who are teaching in my school have already got more than a reasonable full-time load in teaching alone.<sup>47</sup>

9.58 Dr Hort told the Committee that a problem with casual staff is that they do not normally engage with the material they are teaching in the same kind of active way that one would expect with tenured staff. In their dealings with students they do not reflect the kind of analysis or the kinds of perspectives which undergraduate students need to be exposed to. The characteristic of academic teaching, appropriate to universities, according to Dr Hort, is that an academic has, or should have, a critical

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43 Submission 167, Sydney University SRC, p.7

44 Submission 54, Dr Linda Hort, p.

45 Dr Craig McInnis, *The Work Roles of Academics in Australian Universities*, DETYA, 1999, p.63

46 Submission 283, NTEU, p.9

47 Submission 58, Dr Myra Dunn, p.1

perspective on the field of study that is being taught. Casual teachers may have read the books but may not have synthesised all the material in a way which challenges and enlightens.<sup>48</sup>

9.59 Casual staff are reported to be a relatively contented section of the university work force, but the Committee received some evidence of the precarious position many casual staff must be in, and the degree to which they are powerless in the administrative arrangements made for them. One part-time tutor at Southern Cross University described how in 1997 he was paid \$36.20 an hour for a period of 110 hours, and was allowed one hour to mark a 2000 word essay. In 1998 the pay was reduced to \$21.24 per hour, and the marking time for a 2000 word essay was reduced to 15 minutes, in addition to the fact that an extra essay had now to be marked. The submission continued:

On the 23 April 1998 the Head of School distributed an e-mail informing all Student Liaison Markers that they would only be paid for half an hour to mark any re-submitted assignments. This was a unilateral decision on her behalf without any consultation or reference to the existing contract and the award. When I challenged her decision she recanted and reverted to the status quo. Nevertheless she perceived she had the right to intimidate the most vulnerable workers under her care and the university administration backed her decision...I decided never to work under the same conditions again.<sup>49</sup>

9.60 The Committee notes this particular case as exemplifying a number of unsatisfactory aspects of reliance on casual staff. The first is the potential for exploitation of staff. The Committee also considers it highly unlikely that the same standard of teaching could be sustained by casual staff, who often lack specialised knowledge. The second is that recruitment of casuals with appropriate qualifications and experience must be difficult, particularly in non-metropolitan universities where postgraduate students in relevant disciplines may be in short supply.

9.61 The experience related above is given substance in a submission describing the continuing anxiety about whether funds will be available to pay for tutors and marking:

This concern is pushed down the hierarchy, from the committees which allocate funds, to the faculties, to the schools, which are left with the problem of how to do more with less. Within the school the problem is then pushed back on to the academic, who takes on this great concern about funds, while trying to teach students, while trying to do research. This creates, in some cases, incredibly heavy workloads of administration, teaching and research.<sup>50</sup>

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48 Dr Linda Hort (Griffith University) , *Hansard*, Brisbane, 22 March 2001, p.60-61

49 Submission 69, Mr Kerry Shipman

50 Submission 289, Ms Diane Westerhuis, p.1

9.62 The Committee is disturbed by the apparently ad hoc arrangements that follow in the wake of uncertain funding. It appears that there is a great deal of improvisation with staffing which works only because there are sufficient numbers of unemployed or semi employed would-be academics to fill sudden vacancies. From a 'market' perspective these arrangements work well enough if you disregard the issue of quality teaching, but the Committee believes that factors such as staff morale, student satisfaction and instructional quality demand a more professional arrangement through the provision of more permanent positions.

### *Staff development*

9.63 Surprisingly, there were few references in submissions to the importance of maintaining adequate arrangements for the professional development of academic staff. The Committee takes the view that this is a matter of importance. The increasing strain under which academics work requires that they be properly equipped to handle large tutorial groups and on-line learning. Two submissions referred to the serious shortfall in funding for professional development. One of these estimated that such training was the equivalent of 'one ten thousand of a percent' of most university salary costs.<sup>51</sup>

9.64 The Queensland Government submission noted that an observer could be excused for thinking that research was the main function of universities, when, in fact, teaching represents 90 per cent of the system's use of public funds. While the British government has committed 89 million pounds annually to teaching enhancement programs, only \$1 million was set aside for the same purpose for all Australian universities.<sup>52</sup> Funding at British levels for a system only one third the size would have seen \$30 million spent in Australia.

### **Recommendation Thirty-Six**

**The Committee recommends that DETYA include an emphasis on professional development in profile discussions with universities and that funding be identified for professional development including:**

- **an expansion of the Excellence in Teaching awards program; and**
- **the development of a program of professional development for academics, including formal teaching qualifications.**

### **The teaching and research nexus**

9.65 Most academics are expected to be involved in both the generation of new knowledge, which is research, and the transmission of this knowledge through teaching. Most academics seem to agree that this nexus ensures quality; the

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51 Submission 305, Associate Professor David Tripp, p.13

52 Submission 339, Queensland Government, p.19

combination of the two functions claimed to be mutually reinforcing. An argument prevails that good university teaching can only be undertaken by active researchers, and research is strengthened through interaction with students, although this argument probably applies more to the teaching of honours or postgraduate students. The Committee notes the ways in which this consensus is challenged. It notes that while most will agree that research improves teaching, there is less support for the idea that teaching improves research. It may also be argued that none of this really applies to academics whose principal teaching task is giving mass lectures to first and second year undergraduates and giving them tutorials which are complementary to lectures. In such teaching situations there is little scope for bringing personal research experience to bear on matters in hand.<sup>53</sup>

9.66 McInnis has identified as a matter of increasing urgency for both national policy and institutional management, the question of whether all academics can or should attempt to be both teachers and researchers.<sup>54</sup> A clear majority of academics claim to want to be both, but increasingly, academics have indicated that they have a stronger interest in research than in teaching. The proportion who strongly prefer research to teaching is, at 42 per cent, twice the proportion who indicate their strongest interest is in teaching.

9.67 The reasons for this lie in personal satisfaction and in perceptions of reward, although many academics will claim that research provides a stimulus to teaching, and submissions show that there is a strongly held view that a good teacher needs to be an active researcher.

9.68 There is general agreement that the considerable increase in teaching loads and the various administrative and reporting tasks that are now routine means that there is less time for academic staff to carry out research. The effects of higher teaching loads particularly affects academics in the Humanities, where most research is still done by individuals rather than by teams. As one academic pointed out, whether one works in a team or as an individual, time and freedom from distraction are crucial to both quality and quantity of research output and these opportunities are diminishing.<sup>55</sup>

9.69 The Committee notes that recollections of the binary system still colour the attitudes of some academics to the nexus between teaching and research. Former CAE staff, in particular, have expressed views that are not always in accord with the majority opinion reported by McInnis. One submission noted that the move away from the tiered structure of higher education (CAEs and universities) has placed pressure on academic staff to be proficient at both research and teaching, yet few people have the ability to do both equally effectively.

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53 Peter Coldrake and Laurence Stedman, *Academic Work in the Twenty First Century: changing roles and policies*, DETYA, Occasional Papers 99H, 1999, p.19

54 McInnis, op.cit., p.59

55 Submission 106, Professor Margaret Clunies Ross, pp.2-3

9.70 Other submissions make similar points about the importance of teaching. Professor Richard Johnson states that the most important work that universities do is teach, and that this role matches the most commonly held community view of the function of a university, yet there has been an ‘almost total emphasis of vice-chancellors and others on research as the task of universities.’<sup>56</sup> Most submissions are agreed on why this is so: that placing more resources into competition for research grants rather than teaching not only means that universities gain more funding through competitive grants, but it adds to their prestige and their international profile.<sup>57</sup>

9.71 The Committee favours measures that will enhance the quality of teaching. It acknowledges that for the overwhelming majority of students the university’s obligation is to offer first and foremost a quality undergraduate education. The success of postgraduate studies is also dependent on the quality of undergraduate teaching. Thus the performance of the sector will only show an overall improvement with the increase in the general Commonwealth revenue grant.

### **Equity issues**

9.72 It would be unusual in a generally impoverished sector if the incidence of disadvantage was evenly shared. If anything, overall disadvantage means less likelihood that issues of equity can be resolved.

9.73 The Committee notes that the under-representation of women at senior academic classification levels has changed little over time. According to NTEU research figures the proportion of women working at the lecturer grade levels is far larger, at 70 per cent, than the academic workforce more generally, while at senior lecturer level, the number of women is below the total workforce at that level. At higher levels, associate professor and above, the proportion of women falls away dramatically to 10 per cent, compared with 22 per cent of the total workforce.<sup>58</sup>

9.74 The CAPA Women’s Committee has also pointed out that women are less likely to be the beneficiaries of employer incentives for undertaking postgraduate study. Men are more likely to be given time off to study, and are more likely to have their fees paid by their employers. Women are less likely to be regarded as ‘good investments’, with men being more highly valued as providers of future financial return. The consequences are that women are more heavily represented in postgraduate coursework that are HECS liable than are men, although they are likely to be less able than are men to pay off these debts expeditiously.<sup>59</sup>

9.75 The main barrier to full and equal opportunity for women in higher education is the difficulty they have in securing permanent and tenured positions. Research

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56 Submission 29, Emeritus Professor Richard Johnson, p.1

57 Submission 322, Ms Lucy Cameron, p.4

58 Submission 275, NTEU Women’s Action Committee, p.5

59 Submission 295, CAPA Women’s Committee, pp.15-16

indicates that the reason for this is that women are more likely than men to be studying part-time, and to have had interrupted employment. Far fewer women have Ph.D degrees. Once women have secured a permanent position, their career prospects have been shown to be equal to those of men. Survey data has shown women to be just as career-oriented and ambitious as men, and once on the ladder they have climbed it with as much success as men.<sup>60</sup> The Committee heard from a number of women vice-chancellors and deputy vice-chancellors as part of its inquiry.

9.76 Yet the Committee believes that the appointment of some women to the highest positions in universities is not a guarantee of continued improvement in equality of opportunity. The Committee shares the concern of the NTEU that current government policies are a barrier to the improved prospects for women generally in higher education. Recent changes to the funding of postgraduate degrees, which reduce the funded completion time for higher degrees, will have an adverse affect on women whose study time must be shared with family responsibilities.

9.77 Perhaps the most fundamental reason for pessimism in regard to employment equity issues in higher education is the generally depressed state of university recruitment prospects. Evidence to the Committee makes it clear that in some case casual and part-time appointments are now preferred to permanent appointments. Chairs are being left vacant. Departments are being rationalised or are disappearing. Opportunities for the appointment of women academics are narrowing as these developments proceed. It is no consolation to women academics to suggest to them that academic vacancies will increase dramatically with the retirement in the next few years of many of their senior colleagues, and the departure abroad of many others.

9.78 It is highly likely that within an emerging cohort of relatively inexperienced academics waiting to fill tenured positions over the next ten years, women will be even less experienced than their male colleagues. The Committee believes that only an increase in funding generally will ensure that equity will be achieved.

### **The brain drain**

9.79 That an academic brain drain exists is a commonplace observation in submissions to the inquiry, and this fact has even been conceded, on the basis of ‘anecdotal evidence’ by the Australian Research Council.<sup>61</sup> Broadly speaking, the loss of academic staff to positions abroad is the result of better conditions and more promising opportunities to pursue a particular academic speciality. Submissions indicate that the ‘brain drain’ results as much from approaches and invitations made to Australian academics from universities abroad as from local academics making applications abroad. Of the five inaugural fellows of the Australian Academy of the Humanities elected in 1997, only two are still working in Australia. The Committee has been given a number of reasons for the departure of so many academics to

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60 Submission 275, National Tertiary Education Industry Union Women’s Action Committee, p.9

61 Submission 351, Australian Research Council, p.8

positions abroad, and a description of the consequences of these departures, outlined in a submission from Professor Graeme Turner of the University of Queensland, and himself a Fellow of the Australian Academy of the Humanities.

9.80 First, according to Professor Turner, and a number of other authorities on this subject, working conditions are, in general, significantly worse in Australia than in the other English-speaking countries: Britain, Canada or the United States. In all of these countries teaching hours are much lower, being roughly half the Australian load, and at senior levels involves virtually no undergraduate teaching.

9.81 Second, Australian government policies on higher education have presented themselves as reformist, but are widely seen as punitive. However, there has been no second phase, where government reinvests in the higher education sector. The result is an endless pursuit of funds for the most mundane requirements – computers, technical assistance, conference travel - and a climate where university staff are not valued.

9.82 Third, reinvestment in higher education in most of the developed world is outstripping the token efforts made in this direction by Australian governments and business. In Canada, Britain and the United States, governments have reinvested in higher education. This has not occurred in Australia. The reinvestment that has occurred has been an injection of funds targeted at political priorities rather than aimed at an increasing in operating grant, so the effects are entirely local and not necessarily reflecting the sector's interests. To give some idea of the differentials in play; in the same month as the Commonwealth announced 25 new senior research fellowships to provide 'renewed impetus' for research in Australian universities, the University of Limerick in Ireland announced it would set up 24 new research professorships in that university alone. In Canada, 2,000 new research chairs have been established as part of a national investment in research across the university sector.

9.83 Fourth, the obverse of this situation is that the traditional option of importing talent is no longer available. For those who remain, and who want to continue to build high quality teaching and research groups, overseas recruitment is no longer possible. The University of Queensland tried to appoint a chair in cultural studies in 2000, and failed. Although UQ is one of the best places in the country to work in cultural studies, there were very few appointable applicants, and only one from abroad. The overseas applicant was offered the job, with a 10 per cent loading on a professor's salary and a number of other inducements. His university in the United States was easily able to match this and the offer was declined.

9.84 Finally, a number of submissions assert that the idea that business might play a part in developing universities has failed to live up to initial expectations. Although universities are now far less dependent on public money than they were - most now hover around 50 per cent of their budgets from the public purse - this is not because of investment from business but from other government agencies and fee-paying students. Beyond a number of high profile areas such as biotechnology and information technology business has not invested in universities, either in R&D or



through any more philanthropic motives. In fact, it seems the more governments exhort business to play their part, the less they invest. The lack of any significant acceptance of public responsibility from the business community in Australia is in stark contrast to the situation in the United States, where they play a significant role in university funding.<sup>62</sup>

9.85 A great many other submissions mentioned uncompetitive salaries for academic staff as a factor in the brain drain. The University of New South Wales claimed that for some time it has been almost impossible to recruit staff from the United States or Canada, where average salaries in many disciplines are often 50-100 per cent higher, a problem created by the depreciated Australian dollar. UNSW is now experiencing the drain of major researchers to the United States and to Europe, attracted not only by considerably higher salaries but also by considerably greater money for research and far lower teaching loads. Major universities in Asia were also now taking advantage of the straightened circumstances of Australian universities by recruiting staff from UNSW.<sup>63</sup>

9.86 The Committee has noted sanguine comments on the loss of scholastic talent to Australia: the opinion offered that this loss is temporary. Some have compared the current situation with the days when it was customary for ambitious academics to undertake postgraduate studies abroad and then return to pursue their careers. That is to see Oxbridge or the Ivy League as finishing schools for Australian academics. The Committee does not see current trends in that light. Once our best academics have departed there will be little to entice them back. The exponents of globalisation among those who are reconciled to diminishing levels of Commonwealth funding, will understand that brains will follow available opportunities.

9.87 After considering evidence of the kind outlined above, it is appropriate for the Committee to see the departure of our most outstanding academics for positions abroad as a litmus test of the condition of higher education. As stated in a number of submissions, the lure of higher salaries is not the only reason why academics in Australia are enticed abroad. The overall condition of universities and the serious deterioration of the quality of academic life is the reason for their departure. Academics are pulled, but they are also being pushed, and the result is a serious loss to the nation. The attitude of the Committee is effectively summed up by Professor Turner, a statement which also summarises the main points of evidence provided in this section:

This is a snapshot of the chickens coming home to roost. We might hear more about the adventurous end of science as the place where the overseas head-hunters lurk, and where our education system is being gutted, but the situation is far more endemic than that. I am describing the situation in bread and butter areas of arts and humanities teaching and research - where

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62 Submission 26, Professor Graeme Turner, pp.2-3

63 Submission 263, University of New South Wales, p.2

we once were at the leading edge of the international field and international scholars were eager to come and learn from us. Now we cannot keep the people we have developed, we cannot attract new people to replace them, and we no longer have the funds to provide the education that grew these people in the first place.<sup>64</sup>

9.88 The Committee believes that the university sector can only be as strong and as successful as the academic profession is inspired to make it. In the absence of adequate sources of Commonwealth funding and the resulting difficulties in conducting inspiring academic programs, the morale of academics is considerably diminished. The Committee notes that comments by a DETYA official at the Committee's second Canberra hearing, no doubt reflecting government thinking, cast doubts on the ability of some vice-chancellors to run their institutions inspirationally and successfully. The Committee utterly rejects the aspersions that have been directed at universities, just as it endorses the appreciative comments which several vice-chancellors have made concerning the high levels of professional dedication shown by academic staff generally. The Committee has no doubt that in the absence of this degree of dedication, universities would now be beyond crisis, and succumbing to collapse.

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64 Submission 26, *op. cit.*, p.3