



Secretary

Mr Tim Watling
Committee Secretary
Senate Standing Committee on Education, Employment
and Workplace Relations
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Dear Mr Watling

Inquiry into the Tertiary Education Quality and Standards Agency Bill 2011

I refer to your letter of 25 March 2011 inviting me to make a submission to the Senate Standing Committee on Education, Employment and Workplace Relations with regards to the Tertiary Education Quality and Standards Agency (TEQSA) Bill 2011.

The Department of Innovation, Industry, Science and Research is responsible within government for all matters pertaining to higher education research and research training, and more broadly for the coordination of research policy across government. In this capacity the department supports the bill and recognises the importance of TEQSA as the key regulatory component of the government's integrated package of reforms to higher education and the national innovation system.

Through the 2009-10 Budget the government provided significant new funding for higher education research along with a series of associated reforms. These reforms include Sustainable Research Excellence in Universities (SRE), Collaborative Research Networks (CRN), the Excellence in Research for Australia (ERA) initiative and an increased indexation rate for university funding provided under the *Higher Education Support Act 2003*.

The government also set a range of goals for higher education research as outcomes of these reforms. These goals are outlined in *Powering Ideas - An Innovation Agenda for the 21st Century* and include: increasing the number of research groups performing at world-class levels; increasing collaboration between universities; increasing the research capacity of smaller and regional universities; reducing the gap in funding for the indirect costs of research; and increasing the number of students completing higher degrees by research.

To ensure that these goals are accomplished and that increased public funding for higher education research is effectively spent, it is essential that universities meet standards for research and research training and that they strive to enhance the quality of the research they produce. TEQSA will help to ensure that these outcomes are realised.

Responsibility for TEQSA will be shared by the Minister for Tertiary Education, Skills, Jobs and Workplace Relations and the Minister for Innovation, Industry, Science and Research in line with their portfolio responsibilities. The Minister for Innovation administers the *Australian Research Council Act 2001* and is thus the 'Research Minister' referred to in the bill.

The bill provides that: the Research Minister makes the research standards; the Education Minister makes the other standards; each minister must consult with the other minister before making a standard; and that the Education Minister must consult with the Research Minister before appointing commissioners (including the chief commissioner) and standards panel members (including panel chair).

In addition, the bill provides that higher education providers must comply with threshold standards. These standards are expected to include the requirement that universities deliver Research Masters and PhDs or equivalent Research Doctorates in at least three broad fields of study and undertake research in those fields.

The responsibilities of the Research Minister as set out in the bill are essential to ensuring that any research-related standards are developed as part of the government's broader efforts to increase higher education research excellence, quality and capacity, and that any consultations with the sector concerning the development of standards for research and research training also occur in this broader context.

I hope that this submission provides some assistance to the committee.

Yours sincerely

Mark I Paterson AO

13 April 2011