



University of  
South Australia

20 February 2015

Committee Secretary  
Senate Education and Employment Legislation Committee  
PO Box 6100  
Parliament House  
Canberra ACT 2600

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Dear Committee Secretary

The University of South Australia (UniSA) welcomes the opportunity to make a submission to the Senate Education and Employment Legislation Committee's inquiry into the proposed reforms to higher education outlined in the *Higher Education and Research Reform Bill 2014* (the Bill).

The Bill represents substantial reforms to Australia's higher education system that provide an opportunity to significantly expand and diversify opportunities for students, provide more support for disadvantaged students, and to ensure that Australia's higher education system is world-class and sustainable into the future. UniSA supports the positions of Universities Australia and the Australian Technology Network of Universities in encouraging the Senate to pass the Bill, following consideration of some key matters.

As a university committed to enabling broad access to higher degrees, UniSA supports the expansion of the demand driven system to include sub-bachelor programs. The opportunity to expand UniSA's suite of sub-bachelor programs, and explore opportunities to offer para-professional programs, is welcomed. In the current fiscal environment we would, however, question the Government's proposal to extend the demand driven system to include private providers. The majority of non-HEPs are attracting students with low ATARs, who are not adequately prepared for further study, and opening up the market may lead to significantly higher rates of attrition.

As we have previously stated, the Government's plans to reduce its contribution to tuition fees by 20 per cent is of significant concern, and will place upward pressure on fees. We encourage the Committee to moderate this 20 per cent cut to Commonwealth Supported Places. If the new Commonwealth Grants Scheme funding tiers are to be passed by the Senate, then it is our view that fee deregulation is appropriate to enable universities to recoup this loss in income through increases to student fees to enable the maintenance of quality and viability, and to set fees as appropriate to each university's distinct student cohort.

In respect to the Government's proposed access and equity measures, the maintenance of the Higher Education Participation Program is essential for universities to continue to provide support for students from disadvantaged backgrounds. In the Bill it is proposed that grants as part of the Higher Education (Access and Participation) Program will be provided to universities based on their proportion of students from a low SES background. Further, whilst the new Higher Education Participation (Scholarship Fund) Programme will provide additional financial assistance for low SES students a threshold of low SES student enrolments is proposed. It is our position that support should be provided to all low SES students, regardless of the university that they attend.

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We acknowledge that the Commonwealth Scholarship Scheme will provide additional support for students from disadvantaged backgrounds to access higher education. UniSA believes that universities understand the unique needs of their student cohort, and that each university should be responsible for administering its own scholarship fund.

We look forward to receiving further information on the approach and timeframes for introducing the reforms outlined in the Bill.

Yours sincerely

Professor David G. Lloyd  
Vice Chancellor and President