



19 August 2022

Senator Tony Sheldon
Chair
Senate Education and Employment Legislation Committee
Parliament House
Canberra

By email: eec.senate@aph.gov.au

Dear Senator Sheldon

Jobs and Skills Australia Bill 2022

Thank you for this opportunity to provide feedback on the Jobs and Skills Australia Bill 2022 (the Bill). As the peak body for the universities sector, Universities Australia (UA) advocates for the significant social, economic and cultural value of higher education and research.

UA welcomes the creation of Jobs and Skills Australia (JSA) to support a highly skilled workforce and a strong economy. We especially welcome the agency's proposed focus on consultation between education providers, state and territory governments, unions and industry stakeholders.

Universities are responsible for training a significant portion of the Australian workforce, particularly in areas of the economy experiencing significant demand including STEM, IT and teaching.

Many of the proposed functions of JSA are critical to supercharging Australia's workforce and productivity. In particular, the role of JSA in providing advice to the Government on workforce needs and priorities, workforce forecasting and current, emerging and future skills and training needs will be central to addressing skills shortages in the Australian economy.

Universities have a significant helping Australia meet our future workforce and skills needs. The National Skills Commission tells us that over half of the additional one million people required by 2025 will require a Bachelor degree or higher, while over 40 per cent will require some form of post-secondary qualification. Altogether, nearly all new jobs will require a post-secondary qualification.

Alongside the future workforce and skills needs, lifelong learning and upskilling will become increasingly important for the current workforce to meet the demands of technological changes. They will be required to develop skills to perform their jobs due to technological improvements as well as those that transition between jobs. As education and innovation institutions, Australian universities play a pivotal role in addressing these workforce and skills needs.

In our engagement on this Bill with the office of the Minister for Skills and Training, the Hon Brendan O'Connor MP, and with his department, UA has recommended that JSA be given explicit authority to include universities and higher education providers within its remit.



Providing JSA with the remit to provide independent advice to the Minister for Education, in addition to the Minister for Skills and Training and the Minister for Employment and Workplace Relations would ensure that a holistic picture of Australia's workforce needs is provided to Government. This would allow for more effective policy responses to address current and emerging skills shortages.

UA will raise these issues at the upcoming Jobs and Skills Summit, and we look forward to further engagement with the Committee on JSA.

If there is any more information that I can provide the Committee on this Bill please do not hesitate to contact me at ceo@universitiesaustralia.edu.au.

Yours sincerely,

Catriona Jackson
Chief Executive