

Dear Committee Members,

Thank you for your continued work on the inquiry into university governance. The University Council received the Interim Report on the Quality of Governance at Australian Higher Education Providers with great interest. The insights presented are appreciated and will inform the deliberations of our Council in advancing transparency and accountability.

On close consideration of the Interim Report, and following conversations with our Chancellor, I wish to draw your attention to page 46, specifically the final paragraph of Box 3.4. While it is acknowledged that the Interim Report is quoting directly from a submission, the article referenced and published in the Australian Financial Review contains material inaccuracies. These concerns were raised directly with the journalist following publication.

The statement that “two-thirds of undergraduate students drop out of their degree within three years” misrepresents the Department of Education’s cohort completion data. It appears to be quoting three year completion rates. Completion rates measure the proportion of students who complete their degrees within a defined timeframe and do not equate to attrition. At Southern Cross University, many students study part-time or as mature-age learners, and therefore complete their degrees over extended periods. Our internal data indicates that attrition rates have declined from 30.7% in 2019 to 24.1% in 2024, with retention now at 75.2% for commencing students and 82.9% for continuing students.

Similarly, the suggestion of declining applications does not reflect our admissions data. The article appears to rely on data from UAC or QTAC which is an external application pathway. It has not factored in applications made directly to the University. Our data reflects a 15% increase in Commonwealth supported enrolments in 2025.

We would be grateful if the Committee would consider these clarifications.

Yours sincerely

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CRICOS Provider: 01241G

TEQSA Provider Code: PRV12043 Australian University

Southern Cross University acknowledges and pays respect to the ancestors, Elders and descendants of the Lands upon which we meet and study.

