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Mr Gerry McNally
Committee Secretary
Senate Education and Employment Committees
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Dear Mr McNally

Thank you for your invitation to make a submission addressing the *Universities Accord (Australian Tertiary Education Commission) Bill 2025* (Universities Accord Bill) and *Universities Accord (Australian Tertiary Education Commission) (Consequential and Transitional Provisions) Bill 2025* (Consequential and Transitional Provisions Bill). I am pleased to see the work progress and thank you for your attention to this important issue.

Tasmania's feedback addresses two key areas of the proposed legislation: the design of compliance and reporting requirements, and the scope of the Australian Tertiary Education Commission's role in relation to vocational education and training (VET).

Additional compliance mechanisms introduced through the Australian Tertiary Education Commission (ATEC) framework should complement, rather than duplicate, existing obligations under the *Higher Education Support Act 2003* and the *Tertiary Education Quality and Standards Agency Act 2011*. This should be recognised through development and implementation of the new mechanisms.

Relevant provisions include Part 3 of the Universities Accord Bill, which establishes mission-based compacts and associated compliance levers; Part 4, which sets out ATEC's monitoring and reporting functions; and Schedule 1, which introduces the National Tertiary Education Objective. The Consequential and Transitional Provisions Bill also amends the *Higher Education Support Act 2003* to enable compliance action where a compact is not in force for a year and provides transitional rule-making powers.

These mechanisms should be demonstrably necessary and proportionate, avoid administrative burden and ensure that reporting requirements contribute directly to improved educational and research outcomes. Integration with existing data collections and reporting platforms is essential to minimise duplication.

Compliance obligations should, at their core, add value for students by generating actionable insights that improve equity, participation, and completion rates, rather than diverting resources from teaching and support services.

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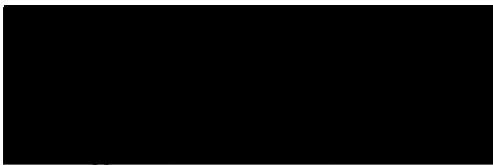
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Further, under Part 4 of the *Universities Accord Bill*, the Bill provides that ATEC may advise Commonwealth and State or Territory Ministers, on request by the Minister, on opportunities to improve collaboration and coordination between the higher education and VET systems. The scope of ATEC's role in relation to VET must remain clearly bounded and reflect the responsibilities of states and territories for VET administration.

While the Explanatory Memorandum confirms that ATEC will have a limited advisory role only and no decision-making functions in relation to VET. It is important that this limitation is maintained in practice. Any advice provided by ATEC should be developed in consultation with state and territory governments and relevant VET stakeholders to avoid duplication or conflict with existing governance arrangements. The advisory function should focus on improving student mobility and lifelong learning opportunities across sectors, rather than imposing additional compliance obligations on VET providers.

The Bills present an opportunity to strengthen system stewardship and coordination, they have the potential to deliver tangible improvements in access, participation, and completion for students. If implemented with appropriate safeguards, the framework will not only streamline governance but also ensure that compliance and coordination efforts translate into better educational experiences and outcomes for learners across Australia.

Yours sincerely



Hon Jo Palmer MLC
Minister for Education