

To: education@aph.gov.au

From: Professor Paul Harpur OAM

Subject: Submission on the Australian Tertiary Education Commission Bill

Dear Committee Secretariat,

Please find attached my submission regarding the Australian Tertiary Education Commission Bill.

In addition to adopting compacts with each university, I recommend that ATEC adopt sector-wide strategies, including a disability-led inclusion plan, to enhance equity and quality across Australian higher education.

Thank you for considering this submission.

Kind regards,

Professor Paul Harpur OAM

The University of Queensland

Submission on the Australian Tertiary Education Commission (ATEC) Bill

Thank you for the opportunity to provide feedback on the Australian Tertiary Education Commission (ATEC) Bill. I support the establishment of ATEC as an independent steward for Australia's higher education system. However, I believe the Bill should go further than enabling ATEC to create compacts with individual universities.

ATEC should draw on expertise across the entire sector and develop sector-wide plans to enhance the quality and equity of Australian higher education. Limiting ATEC to bilateral agreements risks fragmentation and inconsistency. A coordinated, sector-wide approach will ensure that reforms are comprehensive and inclusive.

An example of this need is the development of a disability-led disability inclusion strategy. Australia should adopt a national approach to disability inclusion in higher education, similar to the way we embed Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander perspectives. Such a strategy would ensure that students and staff with disabilities are not only accommodated but actively included in shaping policy and practice. This creates consistencies, but also reduces costs as developing processes and tools can be shared across providers.

This recommendation is supported by research from Harpur, Stafford, and Ellis, who argue for systemic change to achieve genuine inclusion.

I urge the Committee to amend the Bill to empower ATEC to lead sector-wide planning and inclusion strategies. Thank you for considering this submission.