



Delivering the Australian Tertiary Education Commission

In the 2024-25 Budget, the Australian Government committed to establish an Australian Tertiary Education Commission (ATEC) as a steward of Australia's tertiary education system.

This was a key recommendation from the Australian Universities Accord Final Report.

The Government will provide \$54.0 million (from 2024-25 to 2034-35) to establish the ATEC, which will play a key role in driving important structural reforms to grow equity participation and meet Australia's skills needs.

How will this initiative work?

The ATEC will be established and led by three expert Commissioners who will be appointed as independent statutory officeholders and supported by the ATEC's Executive Director and staff.

Legislation will describe its functions and provide a direct reporting relationship to Ministers.

It will begin operating in an interim capacity from 1 July 2025, and then permanently from 1 January 2026, subject to the passage of legislation.

The ATEC Commissioners will bring extensive experience in tertiary education, a history of delivering great public outcomes, a deep understanding of equity issues and a strong commitment to consultation and engagement. There will be a dedicated First Nations Commissioner to ensure that First Nations perspectives are central to the higher education sector. Commissioners will operate as a collective to make decisions, with the intention being that Commissioners should aim to reach consensus wherever possible.

The ATEC will implement landmark reforms to higher education, working across the tertiary system on breaking down barriers between higher education and vocational education and training (VET), delivering new changes to higher education funding, and negotiating enhanced mission-based compacts with providers to align with national priorities and support deep engagement on data, transparency and research.

The ATEC will also promote and plan for a diverse higher education sector by monitoring and providing advice on the size, shape and diversity of Australia's higher education sector, including priorities for growth and the establishment of new providers to meet student demand and skills needs.

To ensure the ATEC is meeting its objectives, it will be evaluated after two years of full operation and externally reviewed after five years of operation.

Why is it important?

The Government has set a national target of 80 per cent of the workforce having a tertiary qualification by 2050 – an important target from the Accord.

The ATEC will commence work on the pathway to achieving this target by managing the introduction of a new Managed Growth Funding system for higher education institutions as well as a new Needs-based Funding system to ensure more students can access, participate and succeed in higher education.

Over the next quarter of a century Australia is going to need more teachers, more nurses, more doctors, more ICT workers, and more engineers than we have today, which means we need a growing, equitable tertiary education system.

Who will benefit?

Reaching the 80 per cent education attainment target will deliver significant benefits to individuals throughout Australia as well as the national economy.

As sector steward for higher education, the ATEC will deliver improvements for higher education providers, students and governments. The ATEC will focus on equity, making sure that there are enough places in universities to allow more people access to the opportunities that higher education can deliver.

It will also work with all tertiary education providers and with State and Territory governments to promote tertiary harmonisation efforts and improve the pathways for students between the vocational education and training (VET) and higher education sectors.

How much will this cost?

The Government has committed \$54.0 million (from 2024-25 to 2034-35) to establish the Australian Tertiary Education Commission as an independent steward for the tertiary education system.