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## **Submission on the Australian Universities Accord Interim Report**

### *Summary*

- The Interim Report recognises a need for change in university governance and management, but does not proffer substantive detail concerning the nature and extent of such change.
- We argue that the need is critical. The corporate managerial takeover of Australian universities and effective removal of all autonomous academic decision making in governance and at faculty and departmental levels even over their own spheres of responsibility in favour of a controlling, hierarchical organisational structure lacking appropriate education expertise is, in international comparison, an extraordinary anomaly, and only has close similarities with the UK; in Australia, it remains more extreme. Management bodies at Australian universities are far less accountable than their peers in the corporate sector.<sup>1</sup> University councils are operating in secrecy and without transparency.<sup>2</sup> This is a complete anomaly for public institutions and is damaging to our society and our democracy.

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<sup>1</sup> See <https://theconversation.com/unis-are-run-like-corporations-but-their-leaders-are-less-accountable-heres-an-easy-way-to-fix-that-147194>

<sup>2</sup> See <https://www.thesaturdaypaper.com.au/news/education/2023/08/26/the-destruction-university-faculties#mtr>

- Corporate governance has imposed business practices, ideology and metrics to education that are inappropriate to the ways in which good teaching and research are done, and how individual human beings learn and create. There is no credible pedagogical expertise on display here, and such an approach is self-defeating and contradicted by international elite university practice.
- Education should not be viewed as an economic sector, a business or an industry, or as a commercial enterprise. Knowledge should not be a commodity for the purposes of education or commercial research; education has much broader functions and benefits, and should be fully treated as such.
- The explicit justification of the Dawkins ‘reform’ for *some* business participation in universities did not envisage what has happened, it should have been limited to ensuring good university administration – not all academic governance – in face of diverse future challenges, and that graduates acquired all of the knowledge and skills as required for employment in *some* sectors (only), as distinct from what they would be expected to learn in all professional degree programmes to qualify to exercise those professions. In the last 30 years, that has not been achieved, and that failure is due to both corporate university management itself and to successive Coalition and Labor governments. More of the same will not achieve a different outcome.
- Better governance requires sufficient long-term committed funding of universities by government to enable them to do their job, and better regulation to ensure that sufficient funding and other revenue is spent directly on the costs of teaching and research – the core activities of universities – which should include the employment of an estimated 5 times as many F/T continuing (tenured) academics as we currently have, estimated upon levels of current enrolments, and an end to forced redundancies and majority casualisation, and that funding does not continue to be wasted as it currently is on non-essential expenditure (including excessive executive salary packages). The current, preventable challenges faced by universities have been in good measure caused by insufficient government funding and regulation. Domestic education and research from which we expect to profit should be funded by Australia, not by international student fees.
- Management is responsible for a wide range of self-defeating and egregious behaviours, which have substantively reduced the quality & standards of all university education across all discipline areas and at all degree levels, and for international students, in comparison with both pre-Dawkins and current international standards; chronic cost-cutting of sufficient funding for teaching and research needs; for an estimated mental health problem incidence among academic staff of 50% for more than a decade; for an accumulation of assets that are not used

to fund teaching and research, and 50-70% non-academic budgetary allocation that could be considerably reduced; proliferation of administrative and managerial positions, some on high salaries, while directly academic related positions have been proportionately reduced; poor ‘student experience’ and staff morale; failure to prevent a 30-year national skills shortage; forced redundancies of critical academics and discipline of protesting students,<sup>3</sup> denial of the right of freedom of speech, surveillance of email and social media accounts, workplace bullying, unnecessary but routine use of NDAs and denial and contesting of FOI requests, and other coercive and controlling behaviour that should have no place in any workplace in the country and which is anti-democratic; systemic wage theft from both casualised and F/T staff, denial of appropriate career opportunities to casualised staff, perpetuation of gender inequality, elimination of job security (tenure) essential for academics to do their jobs properly, unsustainable workloads far in excess of paid hours and requiring disproportionate administrative burdens while minimising time for independent research and individual student supervision, unreasonable conditions of EBAs, and forcing casualised academics to rely upon Centrelink and/or second jobs in order to survive, whereas one would have expected the country’s most highly educated professionals to be remunerated appropriately, in the way that university managers remunerate themselves, so that such financial insecurity never occurred.<sup>4</sup> Any university reform should address and correct *all* of these issues.

- Contrary to popular perception, the majority of Australian academics are not ‘privileged’ or ‘entitled’ in any way, and have been reduced to extreme levels of exploitation and poverty, financial, career and social insecurity. They are clearly not valued members of Australian society, despite our incalculable dependence upon their work in educating every professional and other university graduate, and are in this respect now no better off or more appreciated than many other workers in public service delivery, including our school teachers, nurses, child and aged and disability care workers.
- Government needs to be clear that chronic insufficient funding of universities, misappropriation and wasted spending of available moneys, which result in unsustainable overwork and inadequate employment and remuneration of teaching staff, poor to non-existent regulation and oversight, and the actions of management are directly responsible for the

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<sup>3</sup> As this recent inquiry found, whistle-blower protections, which should also apply in universities, remain completely inadequate in Australia even despite relevant legislation, and government itself is partly responsible for this failure: [https://www.theguardian.com/australia-news/2023/aug/29/australias-federal-whistleblowing-laws-have-not-protected-anyone-since-inception-analysis-shows?CMP=share\\_btn\\_link](https://www.theguardian.com/australia-news/2023/aug/29/australias-federal-whistleblowing-laws-have-not-protected-anyone-since-inception-analysis-shows?CMP=share_btn_link)

<sup>4</sup> The Panel should fully address the second interim report on insecure work, which details problems in this sector: [https://www.apf.gov.au/Parliamentary\\_Business/Committees/Senate/Job\\_Security/JobSecurity/Second\\_Interim\\_Report](https://www.apf.gov.au/Parliamentary_Business/Committees/Senate/Job_Security/JobSecurity/Second_Interim_Report)

objectives of the Accord process and those of previous higher education policies for the past 30 years, including the Dawkins 'reform', *never* being achieved! Without completely resolving all of those failures, the objectives outlined in the Interim Report will also *never* be achieved, quite irrespective of how desirable they may be.

- Universities, like government and other areas, have been corrupted by the unreasonable contracting of management consultancy firms, which is arguably an inappropriate use of funding, poses significant ethical problems and conflicts of interest, fails to appropriately use greater expertise already available in their own university academic staff, and represents a corruption of universities as public entities and charities as well as of the concept of education as a public good.

- University managements have failed to implement recommendations for the reduction of risk of rape and sexual assault and harassment on campus to improve the safety of staff and students. Inappropriate and discriminatory student feedback presents a challenge to the well-being of lecturers that should be better addressed. Chronic stressors within the toxic university working and employment environment resulting in the highest known incidence of mental ill-health in any sector caused by university management are likewise neither evidence of 'good' employers nor concern for the well-being of Australians.

- Governments are directly responsible for all such problems within our universities, by having initiated the changes that contributed to them, by failing to independently and effectively regulate the sector and to establish enforceable academic quality & standards and the means by which they should be achieved and maintained, by legislating to facilitate greater lack of accountability and transparency by university managements and extension of their powers, by failing to protect the rights of university academic staff, support staff, and students as an ordinary exercise of good government, by State & Territory parliaments failing to critically scrutinise annual university reports, and by ignoring other evidence of problems over the past 30 years until forced to act due to mounting public pressure and the visible effects of the pandemic on the sector.

- The corporate takeover of university governance has transformed not merely the sector, but the conception of what any education is, and what it is not. That reduction of education to the purposes of employment and national economic priorities, which themselves have not been sufficiently met, and which is an international anomaly, denies individual Australians their basic human rights of what an education ought to be (e.g. the 1966 International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, art. 13, ratified by Australia in 1975), and it

impoverishes both civil society and the well-being of a complex multicultural society.<sup>5</sup> This is unacceptable.

- Given that university managements bear principal responsibility for all problems within our universities, that those problems have been permitted to persist for 30 years without any effective correction by either Coalition or Labor governments, they will not be resolved without the removal of all existing university management structures and practices and of those managers. Their role ought to be confined to financial administration only, that *serves* the teaching and research functions of universities, rather than controlling and undermining them. PUA has proposed a model Act, which makes clear how our universities should be governed, and therefore what would need to be changed.
- Universities should fully embody academic values consonant with their purpose and the nature of academic work, and these should be supported, not undermined, by management. Academic work is professional work that involves specialist expertise, requires a high level of autonomy, exercises professional judgements, and serves a higher purpose, namely, the good of society in all its aspects. Academic work implies professional values such as altruism, academic freedom and intellectual integrity, professional autonomy, and collegiality.

### ***Preliminary Comments***

This submission concerns only the topic of university governance and management and consequences of it. This topic constitutes the substance of the fifth principal recommendation of the Interim Report, and this submission can be read as a response to that recommendation, with these additional comments. It is encouraging that the Panel has taken cognisance of the fact that governance and management are now viewed as major problems in themselves and as the causes of multiple additional problems, and that these matters need to be addressed as part of the Accord (or, ‘Concord’) that will shape our universities and their service to the community and the nation into the future.

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<sup>5</sup> <https://puau.org/2023/08/06/what-is-an-education/>

It is of considerable concern to academics, students, and the general public,<sup>6</sup> nonetheless, that the ways in which both the Accord and the Commonwealth Government are, at present, expected to address those matters appear to be very conservative and likely to leave the existing organisational cultures largely unchanged that are in fact the crux of the problem. We believe that a radical transformation of our universities was initiated by the Dawkins ‘reform’ commencing in 1987/8,<sup>7</sup> and in several further stages by the late 1990s<sup>8</sup> and then following further intervention by the then Minister for Education, Science and Training, Brendan Nelson (2001-6), under the Howard government in particular, and then the Rudd-Gillard government’s Bradley Review and Response.<sup>9</sup> That transformation has fundamentally changed – in our opinion, for the worse – how universities and the education they are responsible for providing are understood, from being a ‘common good’ with tangible benefits extending far beyond and not limited to employment and the economy, to being a commercial enterprise or ‘industry’ with the commodification of ‘knowledge’<sup>10</sup> and appearing to have no value whatsoever that does not directly profit the economy. That attitude also characterises the Accord. That same transformation has removed academics, support staff, and students, who together in fact constitute what a ‘university’ is, and union representation, from all effective decision-making offices and majority representation on university boards, senates and councils. Those who constitute what a ‘university’ is, and who are responsible for delivering the education and research that universities offer and undertake, and who are highly qualified experts in their own right, now have no autonomy even over their own work, and are entirely subject in practice to the control of managements, which do not constitute part of the university community of

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<sup>6</sup> The discussion feed on this article offers some insight into the problems perceived by and concerning not merely academics but also members of the general public:

<https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2023/aug/25/how-did-australias-university-system-get-so-broken-pretty-m>

Cf. also e.g. [The destruction of university faculties | The Saturday Paper](#)

"The Universities Accord draft contains 'spiky' ideas, but puts a question mark over the spikiest one of all" –

<https://theconversation.com/the-universities-accord-draft-contains-spiky-ideas-but-puts-a-question-mark-over-the-spikiest-one-of-all-210383>

The Australian Universities Accord Interim Report (the Report) was made publicly available on 20 Jul -

<https://johnmenadue.com/the-australian-universities-accord-interim-report-the-devil-is-in-the-detail/>

<https://futurework.org.au/wp-content/uploads/sites/2/2023/07/NTEU-briefing-paper-public-attitudes-on-education-FINAL.pdf>

<sup>7</sup> Green paper 1987: <https://nla.gov.au/nla.cat-vn7831731>

White paper 1988: <https://nla.gov.au/nla.cat-vn455837>

<sup>8</sup> Documented e.g. by Simon Marginson and Mark Considine, *The Enterprise University: Power, Governance and Reinvention in Australia* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000).

<sup>9</sup> <https://www.voced.edu.au/content/ngv%3A32134>

<http://hdl.voced.edu.au/10707/131634>

<sup>10</sup> As already observed by Jean-François Lyotard, *La Condition moderne. Rapport sur la savoir* (Paris: Éditions de Minuit, 1979).

teachers, students, and researchers, who do not manage their institutions specifically in a manner that maximises their capacity to engage in those activities, and who have very poor sectorial expertise and qualification.<sup>11</sup> It is that management that is the principal cause of all problems within our universities. Australian tertiary education cannot be effectively reformed without removing that management from decisive control over these institutions, and reducing its sphere of responsibility to supportive administrative roles only, in a manner proportionately just as radical as the transformation initiated by the Dawkins 'reform'.

The Dawkins 'reform' was initiated with exactly the same ostensible objectives as the present Accord, namely, to equip as many Australians as are needed to serve the nation's social and economic needs into the future with all of the education, skills and training that they need; to ensure that we do not have any skills shortage; and that *some* research undertaken in universities should serve the needs of our domestic economy. We believe that *some* research is equally essential for non-quantifiable, non-economic, social and teaching purposes, which are not considered in the Accord documents, but which should be equally well-funded and supported. None of those objectives has been met over the past 30 years, and while governments (both successive Commonwealth and State & Territory Coalition and Labor governments) also bear responsibility on several levels for those short-comings, university managements bear immediate responsibility. Government shares responsibility by virtue of its consistent cost-cutting in terms of overall funding of universities and research; its failure to effectively regulate both managements and the quality & standards of all education and training; its passage of legislation facilitating the lack of accountability and transparency of university managements and extending their powers; and its chronic lack of sufficient long-term venture capital investment in the onshore development, production and marketing of research outcomes and innovation generated by our universities and other research institutes. In this latter respect, the problem of limited contributions of research to the economy has little to do with the manner in which government persists in framing this problem and proposed solutions: government, and equally inadequate corporate investment, are the principal problem, not the universities. If the Accord continues to define our challenges and to propose solutions in the same way that the Dawkins 'reform' and subsequent governments have done, without comprehending how and why failures in policy implementation have occurred over 30 years and addressing those factors, then it is unlikely that the ostensible objectives of this process

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<sup>11</sup> See "2 out of 3 members of university governing bodies have no professional expertise in the sector. There's the making of a crisis" — <https://theconversation.com/2-out-of-3-members-of-university-governing-bodies-have-no-professional-expertise-in-the-sector-theres-the-making-of-a-crisis-171952>

will ever be achieved in this country. That would be nothing other than doing the same thing repeatedly while expecting a different outcome.

Until the corporate takeover of university governance that followed from the Dawkins ‘reform’, our universities were governed for all academic and research purposes by their own academic communities. That is still normative practice, *mutatis mutandis*, in almost all western university systems, and it is the only viable and responsible means of ensuring the highest quality & standards in teaching, in the training of future scholars, in the education of all professionals graduating from our universities, and in the pursuit of useful research. Under current arrangements, as the past 30 years have clearly demonstrated, none of this is possible. John Dawkins explicitly justified the introduction of more business participation in our universities on two grounds, both of which ought to have been limited to their respective spheres of expertise without compromising the integrity of entire academic communities. Those grounds were: (1) to introduce more competent management of the business aspects of universities that the majority of academics arguably did not possess, in order to steer universities through more complex and diverse challenges, such as the need to find alternative funding streams given the proportionate reduction of government funding while universities were expected to dramatically increase their domestic student enrolments; and (2) to ensure that graduates were indeed ‘job ready’, had acquired the skills needed to navigate more complex and technological employment environments, as well as the ability to continue lifelong learning. Government must commit to full funding of the sector proportionate to real costs, including tenured employment of approximately 5 times as many full-time continuing academics as are currently employed, it must cease and desist from under—funding all public service delivery including education, and it must effectively regulate the sector to ensure that money is spent appropriately on the core activities of our universities, namely, teaching and research.

Corporate university managements have with varying degrees of success and by multiple strategies compensated for government cuts in sectorial funding, but the money they have been able to acquire has not been invested directly in the costs of delivering quality education, and other strategies have also contributing to worsening that quality, including the mass casualisation of the majority of the teaching workforce, excessive workloads, mass redundancies of tens of thousands of academics thereby reducing overall teaching capacity, and unacceptably high teacher-student ratios. An estimated 50-70% of university budgets are now regularly spent on non-core teaching and research expenditure, which could and should itself be substantively reduced and redirected back into costs of academic employment.



The latter Dawkins objective was supposed to ensure that Australia never had the 30-year skills shortage that we have apparently experienced. On the assumption that it is current university management that is directly responsible for graduates not being ‘job ready’, not having all of the skills they are expected to have, not having mastered literacy and numeracy, and not being possessed of ‘critical thinking’ and ‘problem solving’ skills – and if university managements are not responsible for this, then who is, given that all of these issues have been the focus of every higher education review and policy iteration at least since Dawkins? – how does the Accord Panel envisage finally solving any of these problems as long as it continues to leave management unchanged? What else does it envisage doing that would be different from every previous review and government, and which would have a reasonable prospect of ending all of these problems? If current managers and structures are left unchanged, then how will government make them more accountable in ways that ensure that they serve their purpose?

There have now been calls for several years for a Royal Commission or wide-ranging Senate select committee inquiry into universities, with a major focus on the conduct and costs of corporate management, and the need for such an inquiry, if anything, continues to grow and become more urgent. Subject to definition of its terms and appointment, PUA supports the proposal for an independent integrity commission.<sup>12</sup>

There is manifest international evidence that the ‘neoliberal university’ as also represented by our own corporate managements, is seriously inappropriate, has corrupted the functions of universities, and needs to be removed root and branch.<sup>13</sup> Its advocates do not have

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<sup>12</sup> <https://puau.org/2023/07/26/the-case-for-an-independent-education-sector-integrity-commission/>

<sup>13</sup> Cf. e.g. Allan Bloom, *The Closing of the American Mind: How Higher Education has Failed Democracy and Impoverished the Souls of Today's Students* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1987); Jacques Derrida, *L'université sans condition* (Paris: Éditions Galilée, 2001); Frank Donoghue, *The Last Professors: The Twilight of the Humanities in the Corporate University* (New York: Fordham University Press, 2008); Fareed Zakaria, *In Defense of a Liberal Education* (New York: W.W. Norton, 2015); Michael S. Roth, *Beyond the University: Why Liberal Education Matters* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2015); Stuart Macintyre and Anna Clark, *The History Wars* (Melbourne: Melbourne University Press, 2004); *Getting Smart: The Battle for Ideas in Education*, *Griffith Review* 11 (2006); Stuart Macintyre, *The Poor Relation: A History of Social Sciences in Australia* (Melbourne: Melbourne University Press, 2010); Martha C. Nussbaum, *Not For Profit: Why Democracy Needs the Humanities* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2010); Donald Meyers, *Australian Universities: A Portrait of Decline* (AUPOD, 2012); Stefan Collini, *What Are Universities For?* (London: Penguin, 2012); idem, *Speaking of Universities* (London: Verso, 2017); Hannah Forsyth, *A History of the Modern Australian University* (Sydney: NewSouth, 2014); Glyn Davis, *The Australian Idea of a University* (Melbourne: Melbourne University Press, 2017); Tom Nichols, *The Death of Expertise: The Campaign against Established Knowledge and Why It Matters* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017); Raewyn Connell, *The Good University: What Universities Actually Do and Why It's Time for Radical Change* (London: Zedbooks, 2019); *Death of the Public University? Uncertain Futures for Higher Education in the Knowledge Economy*, ed. Cris Shore and Susan Wright (New York: Berghahn Books, 2019); Richard Hil, *Whackademia: An Insider's Account of the Troubled University* (Sydney: NewSouth, 2012); idem, *Selling Students Short: Why You Won't Get the University Education You Deserve* (Sydney: Allen & Unwin, 2015); Benjamin Ginsberg, *The Fall of the Faculty: The Rise of the All-Administrative University and Why It Matters* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2013); Gwilym Croucher and James Waghorne, *Australian Universities: A History of Common Cause* (Sydney: NewSouth Press, 2020); Richard Hil, Kristen Lyons, and

convincing answers to the charges levelled against them, but these criticisms need to be confronted, and government alone can do that. This is additionally indicated now by the manner in which management consultancy firms have been permitted to assume very lucrative roles for which they have no demonstrable competence and expertise whatsoever, including in our universities, and which are an extension of that same neoliberalism.

The single arguably positive achievement of the Hawke government in this area is that the numbers of domestic student enrolments and the percentage of Australians with tertiary qualifications has substantively increased across most, though not all, population groupings. This submission also argues on several other grounds that current management is incompatible with the needs of the academic community and students, as well as of the wider community that is supposed to be served by our universities.

Government incorrectly defines the causes of problems it ostensibly seeks to address, with the result that its proposed solutions are inappropriate and ineffective. It assumes that universities have been well-managed, for example, that current business practices are sound, successful, and should not be independently regulated, despite abundant contrary evidence, and therefore that any problems in education or research must be caused by other factors, and not the actual

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Fern Thompsett, *Transforming Universities in the Midst of Global Crisis: A University for the Common Good* (London: Routledge, 2021); *The Free Speech Wars: How Did We Get Here and Why Does It Matter?*, ed. Charlotte Lydia Riley (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2021); Carolyn Evans, Adrienne Stone and Jade Roberts, *Open Minds: Academic Freedom and Freedom of Speech in Australia* (Melbourne: La Trobe University Press, 2021); Peter Fleming, *Dark Academia: How Universities Die* (London: Pluto Press, 2021); John H. Howard, *Rethinking Australian Higher Education: Towards a Diversified System for the 21st Century* (Canberra: Howard Partners, 2021); Ronald G. Musto, *The Attack on Higher Education: The Dissolution of the American University* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2021); *Learning Curves, Griffith Review* 75 (2022); *Australian Universities: A Conversation about Public Good*, ed. Julia Horne and Matthew A.M. Thomas (Sydney: University of Sydney Press, 2022); Bryan Alexander, *Academia Next: The Futures of Higher Education* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2022); Ulrike Ackermann, *Die neue Schweigespirale: Wie die Politisierung der Wissenschaft unsere Freiheit beschränkt* (Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 2022); *It's Time: The Re-form of Australian Universities, Social Alternatives* 41 (January, 2022); Rob Smith and Vicky Duckworth, *Transformative Teaching and Learning in Further Education: Pedagogies of Hope and Social Justice* (Bristol: Bristol University Press, 2022); Jill Blackmore, *Disrupting Leadership in Entrepreneurial Universities* (London: Bloomsbury, 2023); Allan Patience, *The Idea of the Public University: Discovering and Teaching Knowledge in a Confused World* (London: Routledge, 2023); Michael Wesley, *Mind of the Nation: Universities in Australian Life* (Melbourne: La Trobe University Press, 2023); *Learning under Neoliberalism: Ethnographies of Governance in Higher Education*, ed. Susan Brin Hyatt, Boone W. Shear, and Susan Wright (New York: Berghahn, 2015); *Creating a New Public University and Reviving Democracy: Action Research in Higher Education*, ed. Morten Levin and Davydd J. Greenwood (New York: Berghahn, 2016); *The Experience of Neoliberal Education*, ed. Bonnie Urciuoli (New York: Berghahn, 2018). "Battered and broken. I must get out': what staff told us about teaching and working in universities today" — <https://theconversation.com/battered-and-broken-i-must-get-out-what-staff-told-us-about-teaching-and-working-in-universities-today-208179> [https://www.afr.com/work-and-careers/education/transactional-not-transformational-the-rise-of-the-mega-university-20230616-p5dh3c?fbclid=IwAR00NqnljPkDNhrvShw3yIQ-CExcPONvqHjQE31-a12qTK-s1LuS9W0tzuw\\_aem\\_th\\_AWT3cR2zBR8QV6nYIQsfNKTY717cuSDtra9MDv4h3ZUDhoeADcq6eOhfeC629PtSoL4](https://www.afr.com/work-and-careers/education/transactional-not-transformational-the-rise-of-the-mega-university-20230616-p5dh3c?fbclid=IwAR00NqnljPkDNhrvShw3yIQ-CExcPONvqHjQE31-a12qTK-s1LuS9W0tzuw_aem_th_AWT3cR2zBR8QV6nYIQsfNKTY717cuSDtra9MDv4h3ZUDhoeADcq6eOhfeC629PtSoL4)

causes. Consequently, government then proposes exactly the same responses that have been tried and repeatedly failed for 30 years. This suggests that government itself lacks critical thinking and problem solving skills. Any critical and independent evaluation of higher education in Australia that is free from bias and vested interests, and which is informed by an understanding of best international practice, should conclude that existing problems have been caused by management and government, and not by any extraneous, unforeseen and uncontrollable factors. Upon such a finding, it should then be apparent that university management cannot be permitted to continue to exist as it has done, and that government must also change its priorities and conception of what education is and how it should benefit *all* of our society, and thus be sufficiently funded to that end.

Australia's economy is chronically under-developed because of insufficient venture capital investment by both governments and the business community for more than 70 years, and our economic behaviour has never paralleled that of more developed, successful and globally competitive economies such as some European countries, Japan, the US, and now China. We have binned, shut down, or sold offshore countless innovation and research outcomes, forced potentially profitable niche businesses offshore in search of funding to expand that they could not obtain in their own country (and thereby lost the jobs and revenue they would have generated), and 'invested' in the largest and most sustained 'brain drain' of any developed country for over 60 years - all due an idiosyncratic tight-fisted refusal to invest. We have missed many opportunities for the same reason, not least in relation to renewable and alternative energy technology and manufacturing. We do not have any major manufacturing sector dependent upon domestic R&D and capable of employing large numbers of STEAM+ graduates; our economy has been shrinking for more than 20 years and we rank within the bottom fifth of 133 countries in terms of national economic complexity (cf. Harvard Index). We have no credible knowledge economy, we have essentially a service economy, and we have signally failed to ever maximise our use of available knowledge.<sup>14</sup>

We also limit our capacity by concentrating research funding within the Go8 universities while failing to adequately support all lecturers across all universities as well as in the TAFE system who could, potentially, undertake valuable research were they funded and enabled to do so. Universities are also failing to recognise published research by some of their own academics in order to burden them with more teaching responsibilities, and thereby likewise

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<sup>14</sup> Cf. e.g. "Australia needs a 'knowledge economy' fuelled by scientists and arts graduates: here's why" — <https://theconversation.com/australia-needs-a-knowledge-economy-fuelled-by-scientists-and-arts-graduates-heres-why-212366>

both depriving the country of contributions that such academics could make and depriving them of career advancement that is dependent upon research but not upon teaching. The place and conditions of their employment are not relevant indicators of any academic's research potential.

Unfortunately, neither government nor its advisors and consultants nor the Productivity Commission nor any relevant government department appear to understand any of our national economic idiosyncrasies and aberrations, or have realistic and long-term strategies to address them. As long as that incomprehension and negligence persist, it is utterly useless for any education & training policy to expect that merely feeding more students through mass universities will change anything. That is a false assumption already made by the Hawke government, and lessons that should have been learned have, to date, apparently not been learned at all. This core problem of insufficient long-term venture capital investment is not understood by government or economic analysts and commentators, who presumably assume that we are behaving like every other country without achieving the same results, and without major tax reform, government prepared to sustain more debt over the short- to mid-term, businesses willing to re-invest more of their profits, and some risk taking, this is unlikely to change. This is in fact the main reason why universities have allegedly not contributed to our national economic priorities in the manner tirelessly envisaged by education & training policies over decades, not primarily because of inadequacies in our education & training systems *per se* (although many such inadequacies do exist). Our under-developed economy will never generate sufficient and appropriate career opportunities for all university graduates, including STEAM+ graduates, without more robust and generous long-term economic planning and investment. On that basis, all education & training policies will continue to fail, and students will continue to be encouraged to complete post-secondary education & training without any realistic prospects of relevant employment.

International student fees should be paying for one thing, and one thing only, namely, the costs of providing their education. That money should not be used to subsidise funding costs for our universities that government should be bearing, it should not be misappropriated for other uses by university managements, and it should not be used to fund domestic research that we should also be fully investing in ourselves. From this perspective, it is of some concern that a levy has been proposed on international student fees in order to correct a problem caused by both government and university managements, which could then lead those managements to further increase already exorbitant international student fees. That levy is not the most appropriate means of solving these problems, which would have been prevented by better

government regulation and funding of the sector and of research (our national investment in research already being at one of the lowest levels among OECD countries).

We would also welcome the proposal for a tertiary education integrity commission as a national governance agency for universities. There is currently no effective sectorial regulator. Student representative organisations would like a commission as a 3<sup>rd</sup>-party adjudicator between student organisations and universities to ensure that the Student Service Amenities Fees are fairly distributed. An independent commission in which university managers are not represented or able to exert influence should be established as part of the recommendations of a Royal Commission or Senate select committee inquiry into all of the problems in our universities. The current Accord consultation is not an adequate inquiry process, and existing regulatory agencies and mechanisms have not been effective.

### ***1. Universities as Good Employers***

A ‘good’ employer would employ all of one’s staff under optimal employment and working conditions, which would ensure that everybody is able to perform their expected roles. This is not and has not for 30 years been the reality of academic or other work in Australian universities. That failure has direct consequences for the quality of education that they provide, and it means that students are not getting value for the fees they are paying.

It should also be the joint responsibility of government and employers to ensure that the conditions under which people are employed in *any* job should be sufficient to enable them to maintain a dignified and acceptable standard of living and quality of life, which with the majority casualisation of Australian university lecturers has not been possible, but which has been further complicated by systemic wage theft, for work required but not paid, which was neglected over years by both government and universities and their auditors. Further, by the fact that casualised teaching staff require second jobs and/or JobSeeker payments to assist them in their basic living expenses; and that casualised employment is not compatible as practised in this country with ideal academic quality & standards of education, it provides no long-term career advancement perspectives; both that issue and also the so-called ‘demand’ employment of academics instead of permanently employing them as a national knowledge asset means that we fail to maintain a sufficient permanent supply of the academics whom we need within our universities; and it is not appropriate if academics are expected to remain *au fait* in their discipline areas, and to be available and prepared when ‘demand’ requires but

forced to survive without support when ‘demand’ does not need them. These are all very short-sighted behaviours.

It has also been estimated that there has been a 50% incidence rate of mental health problems among Australian university staff for more than a decade,<sup>15</sup> although more research is required in order to precise and substantiate this estimate; this means that the pandemic should not be viewed as the cause of such incidence, although the incidence spiked in 2020/1, likewise for students. This incidence is despite national and some State & Territory mental health and suicide prevention plans being in place since 1992, and a Victorian Royal Commission into a 20% mental health problem incidence rate among first-responders, among other things, and yet, academics’ and teachers’ mental health problems have been consistently ignored by those same governments and by their employers. Those problems are primarily caused by management and the toxic employment and working conditions in universities. This incidence of mental health problems is not due to genetics or biological causes: it is preventable, and it is caused by ambient stressors for which employers are responsible – in this case, university managements. This problem should have been explicitly acknowledged by the Panel. Workplace bullying is also widespread, both as a coercive tactic of management and as a stress response between other staff. Job insecurity is also used as a means of control and coercion, along with surveillance of staff and students, forced redundancy in the case of academics who express criticism of management (of which dozens of examples can be documented), and the denial of freedom of speech. The entire situation of academic and non-

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<sup>15</sup> See e.g. Fran Baum et al., ‘The Corporate University and its Impact on Health in Australia’, *Social Alternatives* 41/1 (2022): 52-62, <https://socialalternatives.com/issue/its-time-the-re-form-of-australian-public-universities/>  
<https://doi.org/10.5539.ies.v14n12p99>  
<https://doi.org/10.1080/1360080X.2021.1934246>  
[gill-breaking-the-silence-2.pdf \(platform-hnu.nl\)](#)

"More academics and students have mental health problems than ever before" — <https://theconversation.com/more-academics-and-students-have-mental-health-problems-than-ever-before-90339>

"Should university instructors disclose mental health conditions? It's complicated" — <https://theconversation.com/should-university-instructors-disclose-mental-health-conditions-its-complicated-172583>

It is now internationally recognised both that there are significant incidences of mental health and associated problems experienced by academics and that corporate managerial practices affecting the workplace and employment security directly contribute to the mental ill-health of their employees. It is acknowledged that there are difficulties in estimating exact statistics of such incidence and that there is currently insufficient research to facilitate such estimates, despite some claims. Nonetheless, this is an issue that has to date not attracted sufficient appropriate attention in either universities themselves or by government or within the mental health sector and policy responses. It could also be argued that in view of the distinctive characteristics of academics generally, including high-achievement, self-discipline, and potential social isolation due to the nature of their work, they constitute a vulnerable population cohort.

academic employment in our universities is not consistent with those institutions being “good employers”.

University management also imposed unreasonable additional pressures upon their teaching staff in response to the lockdowns and other effects of the pandemic, including even further increased workloads that were not remunerated or only insufficiently, and that further reduced the quality of teaching, as well as job insecurity.

However, while we would encourage robust reform of university governance and management to address all of these problems, these are now widely embedded in all business practice, including in government itself and in all corporations. These are integral to the ideology of Neoliberalism and management consultancy, they are justified on the grounds that such behaviour improves productivity and efficiency (although management is incentivised while employees are penalised), and they have been applied in universities since the 1990s because they are part of the attitude that education is a commodity and that universities are no different from any other corporate enterprise. Business metrics have been applied to all aspects of education that are entirely inappropriate to that process, in which there is necessarily an exceptionally high degree of variation and individuality in teaching, in learning, and in research, that cannot be accommodated by standardised expectations. Genuine pedagogy and corporate university governance are as chalk and cheese. In order to convincingly address these problems, therefore, the entire underpinning of this ideology, not merely in universities but throughout all sectors of employment, including government, would need to be abandoned, and replaced with a more genuinely human-centred, equitable, human rights value system in our society. There are larger problems of social values and ethics involved here that need to be acknowledged.

Voluntary compliance by university management with recommendations to be good employers will not achieve the necessary change. The current situation has been actively facilitated by both Commonwealth and State & Territory governments, and that legislation must be appropriately amended, and then enforced by the responsible agencies. We have now experienced an entire generation of both managers and academics who do not know anything else but this model and who have no experience of different – and arguably far superior – models, and who now cannot easily change.

Change would require an end to EBAs and the re-introduction of appropriately calculated and incrementally increased award salaries that appropriately reflect the very high level of professionalism, education and training of academics, an end to all involuntary casualisation, an end to the out-sourcing of non-academic (and academic) work and re-employment as

employees of universities of all such staff – including support staff. It would require that all wage theft, including against full-time staff, be made a criminal offence. It would require that job descriptions can reasonably be completed within the contracted 38 hours/week, and that universities are permanently and sufficiently funded to be able to so employ the requisite staff. In order to maintain a teacher-student ratio of 1:10 calculated on full-time continuing academic staff only (not FTE, and not contract/sessional staff, and with a minimum of an earned PhD) and appropriate to existing levels of enrolments, with manageable workloads and in order to also address other issues, it would be necessary for universities to be sufficiently funded to employ approximately 5 times as many full-time continuing academic staff as they currently do; they should either do this, and ensure that existing funding and revenue of all universities are better spent to serve this purpose as a priority, or we should stop enrolling so many students, both domestic and international, because the existing situation is not sustainable. It would require an end to all controlling actions by management of students and staff, including an end to forced redundancy for criticism of universities by their own staff, an end to the indiscriminate and usually unjustified use of NDAs, an end to HR or managerial monitoring of staff and student social media and email accounts, an end to workplace bullying, other intimidation and insecure employment.

## ***2. Staff and Student Safety***

Bullying has already been mentioned above.

Two other issues of safety are of particular concern, but neither of them has been convincingly addressed by university management: rape and sexual assault and harassment; and primarily verbal attacks by students against lecturers in feedback.

On average, 275 students are subjected to sexual assault in university contexts each week, and there is a proportionately high incidence of sexual assault and harassment among academic and other staff. Universities have refused to implement recommendations now half a decade old in order to reduce this incidence and improve personal safety. These problems majority affect women, but some men also report such incidences. This would suggest that staff and student safety is not a priority for university managements. The issue of sexual assault on campus is currently under further consideration.

At the same time, however, the problems of rape, sexual assault and harassment on campuses and in student accommodation cannot be viewed in isolation from broader failures



of our policing and legal systems to act in favour of purported victims when reports are made. This is likewise a national systemic failure of our governments and of our entire judicial system, it is mirrored in all of the other ways in which women are disadvantaged and treated in unequal ways, and until victims can report such incidences in the confidence that they will not be discredited, attacked, undermined, and humiliated, but treated with consideration and respect, no example is being set for any community body such as universities to improve their response here.<sup>16</sup> We also cannot expect a reduction in the incidence of these problems when not even our national parliament is capable of addressing these issues in Canberra, of acting on recommendations presented by its own inquiries, and of setting a better example for society.

There have also been reports of apparently widespread abuse directed by students against lecturers, notably if not only in student feedback.<sup>17</sup> This abuse should not occur at all, and raises

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<sup>16</sup> e.g.

[https://www.abc.net.au/news/2023-08-22/higher-education-tertiary-sexual-violence-survey/102755888?utm\\_campaign=abc\\_news\\_web&utm\\_content=mail&utm\\_medium=content\\_shared&utm\\_source=abc\\_news\\_web](https://www.abc.net.au/news/2023-08-22/higher-education-tertiary-sexual-violence-survey/102755888?utm_campaign=abc_news_web&utm_content=mail&utm_medium=content_shared&utm_source=abc_news_web)

[https://www.abc.net.au/news/2023-08-09/university-assaults-on-campus-extent-unknown/102704066?utm\\_campaign=abc\\_news\\_web&utm\\_content=mail&utm\\_medium=content\\_shared&utm\\_source=abc\\_news\\_web](https://www.abc.net.au/news/2023-08-09/university-assaults-on-campus-extent-unknown/102704066?utm_campaign=abc_news_web&utm_content=mail&utm_medium=content_shared&utm_source=abc_news_web)

[https://www.abc.net.au/news/2023-08-14/how-do-we-make-the-justice-system-better-for-victims/102725032?utm\\_campaign=abc\\_news\\_web&utm\\_content=mail&utm\\_medium=content\\_shared&utm\\_source=abc\\_news\\_web](https://www.abc.net.au/news/2023-08-14/how-do-we-make-the-justice-system-better-for-victims/102725032?utm_campaign=abc_news_web&utm_content=mail&utm_medium=content_shared&utm_source=abc_news_web)

[https://www.abc.net.au/news/2023-08-14/major-university-concerns-peak-body-ceo-catriona-jackson/102724888?utm\\_campaign=abc\\_news\\_web&utm\\_content=mail&utm\\_medium=content\\_shared&utm\\_source=abc\\_news\\_web](https://www.abc.net.au/news/2023-08-14/major-university-concerns-peak-body-ceo-catriona-jackson/102724888?utm_campaign=abc_news_web&utm_content=mail&utm_medium=content_shared&utm_source=abc_news_web)

[https://www.abc.net.au/news/2023-08-03/calls-for-government-intervention-assault-on-campus/102678716?utm\\_campaign=abc\\_news\\_web&utm\\_content=mail&utm\\_medium=content\\_shared&utm\\_source=abc\\_news\\_web](https://www.abc.net.au/news/2023-08-03/calls-for-government-intervention-assault-on-campus/102678716?utm_campaign=abc_news_web&utm_content=mail&utm_medium=content_shared&utm_source=abc_news_web)

<https://humanrights.gov.au/our-work/executive-summary-8>

<https://www.teqsa.gov.au/sites/default/files/sash-report-march-2019.pdf>

<https://theconversation.com/sexual-assault-and-harassment-on-campus-universities-havent-made-reporting-easy-they-need-effective-regulation-179843>

<https://humanrights.gov.au/our-work/sex-discrimination/publications/change-course-national-report-sexual-assault-and-sexual>

<https://www.universitiesaustralia.edu.au/project/respect-now-always/>

"Sexual harassment impacts university staff – our research shows how" — <https://theconversation.com/sexual-harassment-impacts-university-staff-our-research-shows-how-211996>

"Sexual offence trials have improved, but there is more to be done: new research" — <https://theconversation.com/sexual-offence-trials-have-improved-but-there-is-more-to-be-done-new-research-211895>

<sup>17</sup> Cf. e.g. "Male teachers are most likely to rate highly in university student feedback" —

<https://theconversation.com/male-teachers-are-most-likely-to-rate-highly-in-university-student-feedback-111741>

"Universities are failing their students through poor feedback practices" —

<https://theconversation.com/universities-are-failing-their-students-through-poor-feedback-practices-86756>

"Read the student survey responses shared by academics and you'll see why Professor Hambling is justified in burning hers" — <https://theconversation.com/read-the-student-survey-responses-shared-by-academics-and-youll-see-why-professor-hambling-is-justified-in-burning-hers-167897>

"'Lose some weight', 'stupid old hag': universities should no longer ask students for anonymous feedback on

questions about causal factors affecting students which conceivably are not primarily caused on campus. An additional problem, however, is the potential for university management to use such feedback against the affected lecturers, and this is also not being regulated. The culture of control and coercion of university staff by managements is, again, a fundamental problem that must be eliminated.

### **3. Membership of University Governing Bodies**

PUA emphatically holds the position that university governance in all areas pertaining to or affecting the *raison d'être* of universities, which is *not* “business”, but rather teaching and research, should lie with elected career academic leaders from those universities for fixed terms of office, and that academic decision making at levels below boards, councils and senates should lie with the respective faculty and departmental academic staff. The entire university academic staff should be entitled to vote in elections of Vice-Chancellors and other similar appointments. It should be noted that this is the situation in most other western university systems, and that the current arrangements of university governance in Australia constitute an international aberration, not a norm. Academics alone possess the competence and expertise for all academic decision making, and members of the business community or the general public or other government appointees do not, generally, possess such expertise. They have no

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their teachers" — <https://theconversation.com/lose-some-weight-stupid-old-hag-universities-should-no-longer-ask-students-for-anonymous-feedback-on-their-teachers-173911>

"We have developed a way to screen student feedback to ensure it's useful, not abusive (and academics don't have to burn it)" — <https://theconversation.com/we-have-developed-a-way-to-screen-student-feedback-to-ensure-its-useful-not-abusive-and-academics-dont-have-to-burn-it-185041>

"Rating your professor: five myths about university teaching quality" — <https://theconversation.com/rating-your-professor-five-myths-about-university-teaching-quality-36129>

"Our uni teachers were already among the world's most stressed. COVID and student feedback have just made things worse" — <https://theconversation.com/our-uni-teachers-were-already-among-the-worlds-most-stressed-covid-and-student-feedback-have-just-made-things-worse-162612>

"What would I say to the face of a student? Why some teachers are giving feedback via video" — <https://theconversation.com/what-would-i-say-to-the-face-of-a-student-why-some-teachers-are-giving-feedback-via-video-209235>

"Gender bias in student surveys on teaching increased with remote learning. What can unis do to ensure a fair go for female staff?" — <https://theconversation.com/gender-bias-in-student-surveys-on-teaching-increased-with-remote-learning-what-can-unis-do-to-ensure-a-fair-go-for-female-staff-178418>

[https://www.abc.net.au/news/2023-08-10/calls-for-reform-of-sexual-assault-trial-handling-in-nsw-/102710990?utm\\_campaign=abc\\_news\\_web&utm\\_content=mail&utm\\_medium=content\\_shared&utm\\_source=abc\\_news\\_web](https://www.abc.net.au/news/2023-08-10/calls-for-reform-of-sexual-assault-trial-handling-in-nsw-/102710990?utm_campaign=abc_news_web&utm_content=mail&utm_medium=content_shared&utm_source=abc_news_web)

[https://www.abc.net.au/news/2023-08-29/nsw-sexual-assault-justice-reform-calls/102754678?utm\\_campaign=abc\\_news\\_web&utm\\_content=mail&utm\\_medium=content\\_shared&utm\\_source=abc\\_news\\_web](https://www.abc.net.au/news/2023-08-29/nsw-sexual-assault-justice-reform-calls/102754678?utm_campaign=abc_news_web&utm_content=mail&utm_medium=content_shared&utm_source=abc_news_web)

[https://www.abc.net.au/news/2023-08-29/nsw-sexual-assault-justice-reform-calls/102754678?utm\\_campaign=abc\\_news\\_web&utm\\_content=mail&utm\\_medium=content\\_shared&utm\\_source=abc\\_news\\_web](https://www.abc.net.au/news/2023-08-29/nsw-sexual-assault-justice-reform-calls/102754678?utm_campaign=abc_news_web&utm_content=mail&utm_medium=content_shared&utm_source=abc_news_web)

[https://www.theguardian.com/society/2023/aug/09/universities-must-treat-students-better-says-father-whose-son-killed-himself?CMP=share\\_btn\\_link](https://www.theguardian.com/society/2023/aug/09/universities-must-treat-students-better-says-father-whose-son-killed-himself?CMP=share_btn_link)

qualification whatsoever to determine the taught content of any university degree programme or whether students should be passed for degrees, or any other aspect of academic quality & standards. All of these matters ought to be, and to have always been, the sole province of competent academics. Currently, that is not the case and all of these matters are effectively determined by unqualified management.

Such decision making includes budgetary allocation: university administrators should not have the power to reduce or control budgetary allocation required to ensure that universities employ sufficient permanent academic staff to meet teaching requirements, deliver courses, provide other services including additional support and tuition, and that universities have all of the resources necessary for education and training. The majority of university budgets should be spent directly on the costs of providing education, a substantial portion of which lies in academic employment.

The precise meaning of this recommendation in terms of “including ensuring additional involvement of people with expertise in the business of universities” needs to be further clarified and questioned, as universities should not be viewed as “businesses” or “industries” or as economic sectors. The corporate management to which all Australian universities have now been subjected for the past 30 years already constitutes arguably as great an involvement of people with business expertise as it is possible to have, it is an internationally almost entirely unparalleled model of governance, and that involvement has failed to achieve what government expects such involvement to achieve. Rather than advocating still more such involvement, the effects of which have been profoundly counter-productive, it would be more appropriate for government to understand why this model has failed, and what alternative model might better achieve what it presumably wishes to achieve. Again, more of the same while expecting a different outcome is futile (see also comments above, pp. 1-5).

In other systems of university governance, administration is subordinate to academic governance and exists to *support* the work of lecturers and researchers, not to dictate to them, limit or impede their work.

Non-academic representation on university boards, councils and senates should not constitute a majority of seats, and it should be borne in mind that their purpose is to ensure that universities meet their obligation to serve the entire community, to meet recognised needs of that community, and to make their knowledge and expertise available to the entire Australian public. Such appointments should not be sinecures or means of inappropriately exercising political or industrial influence upon universities, which then inevitably also affect their academic and student communities. They should be genuinely representative of the entire

Australian population, and enhance the role and standing of those institutions. Effective decision making relative to all academic responsibilities should, however, remain with academic members of boards, senates and councils and with academic Vice Chancellors (i.e. career academics elected by the academic community of their respective universities).

Universities might have benefitted from greater consideration of how various degree programmes could include mandatory courses that ensured that graduates had mastered knowledge and skills deemed desirable by employers, and which prepared them for changes in the nature of work unfolding into the future, but such discussion appears never to have occurred over the past 30 years, and multiple developments have both ensured that employers (i.e. other members of the same business community from which many university managers have come and with whom they are supposed to have co-operated) have continued to complain about the lack of skills of graduates, and to have failed to understand that education in the Arts & Humanities is in fact valued by many employers – but not by university managers or by government. The alleged purposes of the Dawkins ‘reform’ have not been achieved in these respects.

Government appears to persist with a fundamental misunderstanding of the problems in our universities, in our national research environment, and in our current employment and business practice. Until it achieves a better understanding of those problems, and the fact that they will not be resolved by implementing the current recommendations of this Panel, those challenges will not be solved.

In the wake of the PwC scandal as it has affected government, it has also become more apparent that management consultancy firms have infiltrated universities, where they have been active over more than a decade, at considerable expense to institutions supposedly operating on limited budgets, and where in the academic community that constitutes universities, those institutions already have ready access to enormous expertise that no management consultancy firm could ever provide, and yet which has been bypassed by university managements. The integration of Deloitte into the University of Adelaide with an ‘Academy’ suggests that management consultancies are at risk of replacing the traditional university.<sup>18</sup> There are revolving doors between university managements and management

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<sup>18</sup> e.g.

<https://www.smh.com.au/education/they-were-carnivorous-the-universities-spending-millions-on-consultants-like-pwc-20230620-p5dhzk.html>

<https://www.deloitte.com/au/en/careers/students/university-of-adelaide.html>

Cf. also e.g. examples of ethically challenged decisions, which should have been subjected to independent ethics review as research projects are usually expected to be, such as:

<https://www.theguardian.com/australia-news/2023/aug/17/university-of-sydney-gambling-research-centre->

consultancy firms that should not exist, insofar as universities and such firms should be incompatible with one another and with their respective functions.

PUA has produced a model Act that proposes how a university should be governed.<sup>19</sup> This Act is based upon how Australian universities were once governed and how international universities are still governed, and therefore what would need to be legislated to reform current university governance in Australia. It should be clear that universities are constituted by their academic and student communities (including alumni), and not by any corporate management, and that in order for a university to govern itself, all effective decision-making powers should reside with that academic community, with student and other staff representation. The purpose of a university is not economic, not business or industrial *per se*, but the generation, preservation and transmission of *all* human knowledge in the service of the entire community, through teaching, research, and public engagement. Universities are supposed to be public entities, which are partially funded by the taxpayer and which should therefore be accountable to the public, and they are legally charities, and should therefore also be governed accordingly. Currently, they are not at all publicly accountable at any level, including by being held so by the people's elected representatives or by any effective independent regulator.

That model Act is informed by an understanding of academic values.<sup>20</sup> Universities should embody and be governed in accordance with academic values, both as a public example of those values and also in order to ensure that universities are established as environments in which academic work, both teaching and research, can be conducted in a manner consonant with them. Currently, that is not the case, because the behaviour of university managements is inimical of and consistently undermines any free practice of these principles.

Academic work is professional work that involves specialist expertise, requires a high level of autonomy and trust, exercises professional judgements, and serves a higher purpose, namely, the good of society in all its aspects. Academic work implies professional values such as altruism, academic freedom, intellectual rigour and integrity, professional autonomy, robust

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[bankrolled-by-casinos-is-troubling-experts-say?CMP=share\\_btn\\_link](#)

[https://www.theguardian.com/australia-news/2023/aug/22/tone-deaf-mps-call-for-university-of-sydney-to-return-gambling-research-money?CMP=share\\_btn\\_link](https://www.theguardian.com/australia-news/2023/aug/22/tone-deaf-mps-call-for-university-of-sydney-to-return-gambling-research-money?CMP=share_btn_link)

Also e.g. <https://www.themonthly.com.au/issue/2023/september/jackson-ryan/science-fiction-university-labs>  
The various pressures and incentives associated with research in Australia are direct contributing factors in problems of research plagiarism, fraud, poor methodologies and fabricated or manipulated results; universities have a vested interest in not properly policing and investigating these problems, or in reducing the risk of them, and it is clear that no existing mechanism, including peer review, is identifying all such cases. Ultimately, poor regulation of these issues can lead to preventable harm to the general public.

<sup>19</sup> See <https://puau.org/model-act/>

<sup>20</sup> <https://www.professoriate.org/aaup-professional-ethical-framework-for-australian-academics-2/>

scholarly discourse, freedom of speech, commitment to the pursuit and promulgation of knowledge, and collegiality. Academics should have the time to undertake their own research within their job descriptions and as an integral part of their workloads, both for the purposes of supporting their teaching and ensuring that their lectures are always up-to-date in their fields (this is an essential purpose of research *not* recognised by government HE policies), and as part of the collective pursuit and generation of knowledge that ought to serve not merely or necessarily the economy but *all* of our society; it should be funded to that end, academics should be free to determine their own research projects, and research should be separated from any prioritising in relation to international university rankings. This should then mean that research in the Arts & Humanities and the Social Sciences is equally essential to and serves all of our society. Most other western countries understand these values and fund and support academic work including research in a manner compatible with them, and that leaves Australia once more an anomaly in international comparison. Why?

Under current management, universities have de-legitimised themselves, while maintaining the illusory patina of success. They have been responsible for palpable declines in the quality & standards of all higher education, including PhDs and all professional qualifications including Medicine, all of which threatens harm to the entire population dependent upon the calibre of that mediocre education. They have failed over 30 years to serve the purposes defined by successive governments and higher education and training policy reviews and iterations, including contributing to the economy and preparing the population for major national challenges, and by that means, corporate university managements have discredited themselves. They have ceased to be credible embodiments of democracy, generators of new knowledge, preservers and mediators of existing knowledge, and fora for the free discussion of ideas, and become increasingly authoritarian and anti-democratic. Particularly by their considerable reduction in the teaching and research of the Arts & Humanities and the Social Sciences, they have severely reduced their capacity to serve the community in non-profitable but equally essential ways. They have amassed considerable wealth in property and assets that do not benefit either education and research or the general community, and which in some instances – as with unaffordable student accommodation in properties owned by universities and operated for profit (universities being registered charities) – further exploit the community. They cannot be assumed to be responsible to continue doing what they have done.