

31 August 2023

Professor Mary O’Kane AC  
Chair  
Australian Universities Accord Panel

Dear Professor O’Kane

## **Australian Universities Accord - Interim Report - Submission**

The Queensland Tertiary Admissions Centre (QTAC) acknowledges the work done to produce the Australian Universities Accord Interim Report and welcomes the opportunity to provide a submission on the Interim Report.

QTAC is Queensland’s trusted leader in tertiary admissions for over 45 years. QTAC manages applications for 17 higher education providers in Queensland and Northern New South Wales. We have a proud history of accurate and equitable assessment, and a reputation for service excellence amongst our applicants and institutional clients.

Overall QTAC agrees in general terms with the considerations for change outlined in the Interim Report.

As suggested, we have focused our submission and commentary to the considerations for change as they relate to Chapter 2 – Evolving the mission for higher education. We have also limited this discussion to our three most significant reflections on the Interim Report. Those being:

- Meeting Australia’s future skills needs by ensuring “generic skills” are embedded in national skills frameworks accessible to employers and students and not just training providers
- Fast, stackable and portable skills pathways
- National Skills Passport

### **Meeting Australia’s future skills needs**

Whilst we agree with the overall sentiment outlined in the Interim Report under section 2.2, and the imperative to “improve the way skills are developed, described and recognised within a more integrated tertiary education system”, we are of the view that using the term “higher order generic skills” or just “generic skills” is detrimental to the overall skills discussion and lessens the importance of these skills.

The term human capabilities or employability skills are better terms to describe these skills. As outlined in our submission to the Accord (11 April 2023) we strongly recommend and advocate for human capabilities be recognised as credentials in a framework like the AQF.

Currently there is no standardised Australian framework that underpins human capabilities. This limits the development and use of these human capabilities and reduces productivity as employers need to manually assess what a respective capability statement means. And

students are unable to articulate their obtained skills in a meaningful way due to a lack of common language to discuss them. Development of a national framework that can measure and assess competency in these capabilities is considered essential to address this issue.

We acknowledge that the JSA is working towards this but argue that this needs to go further to ensure use by employers and to give students the confidence to articulate their skills in a meaningful way to either pursue further study or obtain employment.

## **Fast, stackable and portable skills pathways**

Having been a contributing member of the Queensland Cross Sector Micro-credential working party for a number of years, QTAC is pleased to see that micro-credentials and the broader discussion of portable and stackable skills pathways are a focus of this Interim Report.

QTAC are currently working across the training and higher education sector to determine our role in facilitating an ecosystem for stackable and portable skills pathways. We welcome the formal review of the Undergraduate Certificate at the end of 2024 to further facilitate the portability of skills and the further blending of work and study to assist with accessibility to higher education and upskilling.

QTAC also reiterates the recommendation made in our earlier submission that TACs' expertise in disseminating information be used to support access and opportunity to skills initiatives.

By providing greater support and opportunities, the higher education sector can help to create a brighter future for all Australians and contribute to a more prosperous and equitable society. QTAC endorse removing barriers to higher education as a priority.

QTAC's observation is that often potential students do not always have access to relevant information so that they can make informed decisions on study options, pathways, job opportunities and credit processes. Ensuring that potential students have access to quality information is fundamental to reducing disadvantage. Relevant information needs to occur prior to application, during the application process and throughout their higher education journey. Examples of information could be relevant equity schemes, scholarships or credit options that an applicant can access.

As an organisation servicing 17 institutions, together with QTAC's relationship with other Australian Tertiary Admissions Centres (TACs), QTAC has access to a large amount of information in a central place that applicants can access. QTAC welcomes an opportunity to collaborate with government to assist in improving access, opportunity and meaning of higher education skills acquisition.

## **National Skills Passport**

QTAC is very supportive of a national skills passport as outlined in the Interim Report. However, would also recommend an enhancement to this concept to also include credit evaluation services and articulation options for stackable credentials.

A skills passport that can support further skills enhancement and growth rather than just a repository for skill attained would provide far more meaning and value to such a concept.

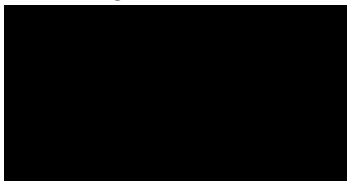
By embedding credit transfer services into such a passport this could help students make informed decisions about their future educational paths and reduce the risk of taking courses that will not transfer to another institution or undertake a micro-credential that does not have the ability to be stacked or has no value on its own.

We would also recommend embedding a jobs component into a skills passport which would support the concept of establishing a national jobs broker system to further support WIL programs.

Overall, QTAC are encouraged by the work of the Australian Universities Accord Interim Report to develop a high quality and equitable higher education system for Australia and have welcomed the opportunities afforded us to contribute to this important discussion.

If you require further information, please contact me directly at [john.griffiths@qtac.edu.au](mailto:john.griffiths@qtac.edu.au).

Kind regards



**Dr John Griffiths**  
**Chief Executive Officer**