To: Peter Noonan, Chair AQF Review Panel

From: Dr Melissa Laird, Executive Director, Student Engagement, Learning and QA, and
       Dr Amanda Morris, Executive Director Conservatoire
       The National Institute of Dramatic Art (NIDA)

Background
The National Institute of Dramatic Art (NIDA) is a dual provider, with accredited Higher Education courses at Diploma, Bachelor and Master levels, and VET courses at Certificate and Diploma levels, namely, AQF levels 5 - 9.

Major contextual issues for the Review

4.1 Wider range of credentials
NIDA is open to the idea of shorter form credential types which could be included in the AQF. As an arts education institution, NIDA is engaged in addressing the need for a process of lifelong learning that is adaptable and responds to industry and social needs. In addition to Higher Education and VET offerings, NIDA has developed extensive programs for people of all ages from the community through the NIDA Open and NIDA Corporate in response to the needs of people to be introduced to new skills, retrain and upskill. As such, the concept of light touch 'regulation' of the non-accredited sector is seen of value to NIDA, to bring both rigor and balance across the sector.

In particular, NIDA is interested in shorter form credentials in relation to major qualifications, which could be applied to aggregated or 'stackable' qualifications based on the achievement of a number of shorter form credentials, in relation to;

- Flexibility and self-authorised packaging of shorter credential types
- Articulating difference between learning experiences and skills development for new learners.

However, additional quality assurance support, if managing many short-form credentials, must be calculated and resourced institutionally.

*NIDA recommends the following 'possible approach'; 'Determine what groupings of shorter form credentials are required, and create them as credential types in the AQF' (p.18).

4.2 Treatment of enterprise and social skills in the AQF
The Discussion Paper notes the growing demand for interpersonal and creative skills, or enterprise and social skills due to the ever-changing nature of work. NIDA demonstrates expertise in learning and teaching, and developing creativity, collaboration, empathy and communication skills through its conservatoire and atelier oriented pedagogies. Student learning through embodied, lived experience learning at NIDA draws out and develops students' social skills such as collaboration, communication, creativity, critical thinking and empathy as they work toward shared visions. As such, NIDA strongly champions the inclusion of the 'Interpersonal and Human Intelligences' and 'Growth' enterprise and social skills presented in Table 1 (p.19).   NIDA recommends strategies for an

ongoing discussion across the sector more broadly, as to how Australia prepares future generations to develop these skills.

*NIDA recommends both 'possible approaches' listed on page 20.

4.3 AQF taxonomies and levels
Duplication of the 'knowledge and skill' fields is confusing and un-necessary. Revision of the descriptors for clarity and relevance is supported. A glossary of terms would be an ideal companion document.

NIDA supports the approach to review the application of knowledge and skills domain of the AQF taxonomy and how it should be applied across the AQF levels and to revise descriptors to simplify them and ensure clear distinctions between levels.

*NIDA recommends the three 'possible approaches' listed on pages 22, 23 and 25.

4.5 Volume of learning
NIDA supports the proposal to;
- Change the volume of learning unit of measurement from years to hours
- Help facilitate pathways between levels and qualifications, develop an hours-based credit point system in the AQF that may be voluntarily referenced by providers.

It would be essential to retain appropriate discipline-oriented pedagogical frameworks and academic rigor, without influence of learner or employer demand, or budget constraints.

NIDA supports a national system to be phased in over time, to strengthen the education sector as a whole.

NIDA recommends the 'possible approach'; 'to provide a common baseline for credit points, base the number of points for qualification types on the needs of a new learner' (p.30).

The three key questions posed:
In what ways is the AQF fit, or not fit, for purpose?
- The review is a timely one, and in line with changing patterns of external engagements and the way we live. The changes proposed go a long way to reconciling what is a difficult task – to map criteria for action from an ever-changing source.

Where it is not fit for purpose, what reforms should be made to the AQF and what are the most urgent priorities?
- Prioritising the potential to include external engagements that may evolve over time, and with increasing uses of technologies.

In relation to approaches suggested, what are the major implementation issues the Review should consider?
- A staged implementation phase is essential, based on continuing consultation and refinements. Communication across the vast group of diverse users of the document will be key.