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1 March 2019

The Hon Justice Robert S French AC
Suite 2, Level 13
Allendale Square
77 St George's Terrace
PERTH WA 6000
Via email: sulcsj@bigpond.com

Dear Justice French,

I am writing in response to your recent correspondence to Professor Dawn Freshwater, Chair of the Group of Eight (Go8) and Vice-Chancellor of the University of Western Australia, in which you outline your work in conducting the Independent Review of Freedom of Speech in Higher Education Providers. As Chief Executive of the Go8, I am responding on Professor Freshwater's behalf.

First, I would like to acknowledge the considerable work you have undertaken through this Review and register the appreciation of the Go8 for the considered and consultative way in which you have approached the task.

In particular, I was pleased that you were able to incorporate in your preliminary draft some of the recommendations made by the Go8, which were established in my correspondence of 19 December 2018.

On considering your correspondence in detail and the proposed Draft Model Code more specifically, the Go8 endorses the position taken by Universities Australia.

The Go8 is also pleased to note you have reached a view that aligns with our own as expressed in our submission that there is in fact no 'free speech crisis' on university campuses. In addition, the Go8 welcomes your delineation of the concepts of academic freedom and freedom of speech; these are critical issues for universities and for research-intensive universities in particular. As you point out, these are often conflated in public debate in a way that diminishes any reasonable broader discussion.

The Go8 would like to emphasise the need for a robust and high-level set of principles to establish a framework within which institution autonomy on these issues can be both preserved and fostered. It is in that context we would seek clarity on how these might be structured, articulated and arrived at.

To that end, the Go8 view is that further discussion and close engagement on these essential issues is required and we are eager to engage constructively in this context.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to be "V. Thomson", written over a light blue horizontal line.

VICKI THOMSON
CHIEF EXECUTIVE