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Professor Mary O’Kane

Panel Chair

Australian Universities Accord Review

**SUBMISSION TO THE AUSTRALIAN UNIVERSITIES ACCORD REVIEW**

Leaders Institute is a registered higher education provider with TEQSA and CRICOS: 03732F and specialises in Agribusiness and Accounting programs. Leaders Institute is one of over 140 non-universities in Australia and contributes to over 400,000 international students in the Australian education system (1-pp 9 & 27, 5 – p 12). Also, in 2022, Leaders Institute was ranked number two on the QUILT survey for student satisfaction with teaching and learning experiences (2).

Certainly, the Australian government paper of 2015 by Deloitte Access Economics states that we are part of the $20 billion education industry which includes over 130,000 skilled migrant workers and contributes $9 billion to the Australia GDP. Furthermore, these international students provide knowledge exchange and international collaboration, trade, and economy links, as well as enhanced cultural capital (3 – pp. 1-40).

Leaders Institute is supportive of the review process and its key areas of review. Although a private higher education institute, we are aware that changes to legislation and standards to the public higher education sector will have an impact on the private sector. Often there are benefits and disbenefits to the private sector resulting from legislation and policy developed by government and especially the Tertiary Education Quality Standards Agency (TEQSA). Leaders Institute would like to present the following issues for consideration by the Review Panel:

1. That any new legislation, policy, or guidelines recommended by the review consider the flow on impact to private higher education institutes. Change in policy can have a significant impact on governance and academic changes to standards which ultimately have a cost impact on the organisation. Private higher education institutes will need to address these standards with increased administrative staff and training of academic staff (5 – pp 157, 161, 165).
2. Educational providers who deal with international students must meet other legislative and policy requirements as well. It is now well known that the pandemic and post visa application processing, particularly from the Asian sub-continent, have impacted significantly on both the private and public sectors. Leaders Institute recognises the need to ensure quality international and national educational standards to meet obligations under the Home Affairs, Immigration departments, and TEQSA. We would support any changes to the operations of educational recruitment agencies in Australia or internationally that would strengthen the quality of higher education in Australia.

Also, with a shift in the marketplace from the China to the Indian market, many of the larger universities are offering reduced tuition fees for completing courses and increased fee benefits to educational recruitment agents which cause difficulty for smaller institutes to compete (5 – p 5). Perhaps, the Review may consider standardised fees for recruitment agents, greater access to FEE-HELP provisions, and a market competition pricing for educational qualifications at private and public sector organisations (5 – pp 6, 25).

1. Leaders Institute delivers higher education postgraduate qualifications which require a capstone research component. Internal budgetary requirements enable the institute to manage research capacity. However, it would be more equitable across the sector for private higher education institutes to have access to Australian Research Council (ARC) funding. Certainly, this strategy is suggested by the KPMG 2023 paper supporting a translation continuum model as government research funding strategy (4 – pp 10, 20). Perhaps, there is an opportunity for the ARC funding to provide a 10 to 20% allocation to private higher education institutes. Currently, our research opportunities are being funded in India, Germany, and South Africa which means Australian industries will not be able to benefit from commercial profitability.
2. With the large potential market in India and recent government agreements regarding access to the Indian educational sector, industries and other educational benefits, there should be a broader policy consideration that provides opportunities for private higher education institutes in Australia to establish delivery sites in India. During the COVID-19 period, students required flexible delivery modes, including online multi-modal delivery to address attrition rates (5 – pp 4, 84, 91-96, 138). This may require further revision to policies related to blended learning and visa educational requirements between the two countries. Furthermore, Indian students having access to the Australian job market due their educational qualification may impact on future education and job ready graduates in Australia. Perhaps there is an opportunity to define a policy which supports a balance between our national interests and international students’ contribution to the Australian workplace e.g. the knowledge and commercial models (5- pp 8-10, 122-123). Agribusiness in Australia is a growing employment sector which will require international support and may provide cross fertilisation into mutually beneficial economic innovations between Australia and India (5 – pp15, 97-99).

Leaders institute is appreciative of the opportunity by the Federal Government to provide our views on this important issue of education, vision, strategy, diversification, policy leadership, and the future impact on Australian educators, researchers, businesses, unions, local government, and Australian families (5 – pp 168, 202).

Professor Grant Pitman

President, Leaders Institute

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