

COUNCILS OF DEANS
OF
AUSTRALIAN UNIVERSITIES

Hon Julia Gillard MP
Prime Minister
PO Box 6022
House of Representatives
Parliament House
Canberra ACT 2600

7 February 2011

Dear Prime Minister,

Australian Learning and Teaching Council Termination

The Councils of Deans that are signatory to this letter represent the leaders of university faculties with more than 30,000 academics. They teach most of the 1.13 million students in Australia's universities. More than 300,000 of our students are from overseas, contributing very significantly to Australia's export earnings.

We write to express our deep concern and dismay at the termination of the Australian Learning and Teaching Council (ALTC). Its loss will leave a huge leadership vacuum in tertiary learning and teaching.

We do not accept that the ALTC represents '... lower priority spending, where the desired outcomes can be achieved through other programs ...'. The ALTC's programs have encouraged nationwide collaborative development and dissemination of evidence-based teaching improvements between disciplines, institutions and institutional groupings. They have generated renewed effort and investment in teaching innovation by institutions. They have enhanced Australia's competitiveness and standing in tertiary teaching internationally.

The ALTC's programs have persuaded an emerging generation of academics that their efforts in teaching can be identified, acknowledged and valued through a national system of peer recognition. Hitherto only research activity has been supported by such a system in the form of the ARC and NHMRC. This imbalance has been a significant contributor to the undervaluing of teaching and innovation in it. The ALTC has given academics some confidence that national recognition of their teaching is a real possibility, and can be translated into institutional and personal rewards, as is the case with research.


We do not accept that such '... outcomes can be achieved through other programs...' To eliminate the ALTC sends a hugely negative message to all academics and institutions about the value of teaching.

It sends this message at a time of 'Education Revolution'. The Government wishes to expand university participation from the 18-25 age cohort and low socio-economic groups. Neither individuals nor institutions will be encouraged in these directions by the removal of an emerging icon of teaching excellence.

As leaders it is often our task to take our staff in directions that they find uncomfortable. It is also our task to listen and respond to what they have to say. By now it is clear that there is huge groundswell of opinion by academic staff against the decision to terminate the ALTC.

We urge the Government to reconsider, and to enter into negotiation with the sector on how teaching excellence may be supported and enhanced across the university system.

Yours sincerely



Professor John Rice
Executive Director
Australian Council of Deans of Science

On behalf of:

Australian Business Deans Council (ABDC)
Australian Council of Deans of Education (ACDE)
Australian Council of Deans of Information and Communications Technology (ACDICT)
Australian Council of Deans of Science (ACDS)
Australian Council of Engineering Deans (ACED)
Australian Deans of Built Environment & Design (ADBED)
Council of Australian Law Deans (CALD)
Council of Deans of Nursing and Midwifery (CDNM)
Australasian Council of Deans of Arts, Social Sciences and Humanities (DASSH)

Copies to:

The Hon Tony Abbott MP: Tony.Abbott.MP@aph.gov.au
Senator the Hon Kim Carr: senator.carr@aph.gov.au
Senator the Hon Christopher Evans: Online Contact Form
The Hon Christopher Pyne MP: C.Pyne.MP@aph.gov.au
Senator Bob Brown: senator.bob.brown@aph.gov.au
Senator Sarah Hanson-Young: senator.hanson-young@aph.gov.au
Senator Scott Ludlam: senator.ludlam@aph.gov.au
Mr Adam Paul Bandt: adam.bandt.mp@aph.gov.au
Senator Christine Milne: senator.milne@aph.gov.au
Senator Rachel Siewert: senator.siewert@aph.gov.au
Mr Robert Oakeshott MP: Contact form
Hon Bob Katter MP: Bob.Katter.MP@aph.gov.au
Mr Andrew Wilkie MP: Contact form
Mr Tony Windsor MP: Tony.Windsor.MP@aph.gov.au
Senator Nick Xenophon: senator.xenophon@aph.gov.au