



Review of Australian Higher Education

SUBMISSION FROM THE UNIVERSITY OF BALLARAT

About the University of Ballarat:

The University of Ballarat is the only regionally headquartered, multi-sector university in Victoria. It is only one of three Australian universities which takes its name from an Indigenous word, with Ballarat meaning “resting place”. The University’s Act mandates that it must provide for the “educational, cultural, professional, technical and vocational services to the community and of persons living and working in Central and Western Victoria.” The University has 25,000 students of whom 7,500 are international students and 25 per cent of its students are studying for postgraduate qualifications. It draws its 17,500 domestic students from across Australia and especially from a broad area of regional Victoria including the communities of Ballarat, Ararat, Stawell, Horsham, Nhill, Hamilton, Maryborough, Warrnambool, Portland, Bacchus Marsh, Bendigo, Mildura and Swan Hill. All of these communities have significantly lower participation rates in postsecondary education than the national average. The University of Ballarat has the highest proportion of regional students (72 per cent) as a percentage of its Commonwealth supported places of any university in Victoria and of all regional universities in Australia. Approximately three in every four of its undergraduate Commonwealth supported students find their first employment in regional and rural areas following graduation from the University of Ballarat.

Dare to be Different is the motto for the University of Ballarat and, throughout its 138 year history and that of its predecessor institutions, a strong belief in this motto has been in evidence. The University has gained a national reputation for its commitment to high quality learning, teaching and training, for its applied research and for its engagement with industry, business and its regional communities. In fulfilling its motto, the University of Ballarat is distinguished from other Australian universities by a set of differences that establish its uniqueness and diversity within the tertiary education sector. The University catalogues its major differences from other universities as follows:

- ***The University of Ballarat*** is the third oldest site of higher learning in Australia with the accompanying rich tradition of learning, teaching, training and research in the arts, sciences, humanities and the trades which comes with this ancestry;
- ***The University of Ballarat*** is the only regional, multi-sector, comprehensive university in Australia with provision for secondary schooling, TAFE, higher education, further education and research students;
- ***The University of Ballarat*** continues to be recognised nationally and internationally for the outcomes and impact from its four research centres: the Centre for Environmental Management; the Centre for Health Research and Practice; the Centre for Informatics and Applied Optimization; and the Centre for Regional Innovation and Competitiveness;
- ***The University of Ballarat*** has international students from more than 40 countries and the single largest number of students from India, Bangladesh, Nepal, Sri Lanka, Lebanon, Poland, Burundi and Cuba of any university in Victoria;
- ***The University of Ballarat*** is the first university in Australia to provide students with the option of completing an undergraduate degree program within TAFE with a Commonwealth supported place;
- ***The University of Ballarat*** is the only regional university in Australia to achieve a top 10 rating from the Commonwealth Government’s Learning and Teaching Performance scheme in 2005, 2006 and 2007; and,
- ***The University of Ballarat*** is the only regional university in Australia with its own technology park, ecology park and Arts Academy for TAFE and higher education students.

What is the Charter of the University of Ballarat?

In responding to the Review of Higher Education, the University takes seriously its key objectives. These key objectives constitute its charter; they denote what it stands for; and, importantly, they set it apart from other Australian universities. In summary, the University has a charter which commits it to:

Producing graduates who are sought after for their outstanding vocational and discipline-specific knowledge, attitudes and aspirations. They are work-ready and adaptable, and able to relate effectively and ethically in work and community involvement. They demonstrate entrepreneurial skills in their approach to innovation and development at their business or workplace and in their communities. Having been stimulated and satisfied by their learning experience at the University of Ballarat, these graduates continue learning, formally and informally. They are active, engaged citizens with a commitment to community involvement and are in demand regionally, nationally and internationally.

Ensuring its students are active and enthusiastic participants in university and community life. The University engages students in their learning, capturing their capacity to learn and to contribute to society. The learning and teaching experience at the University of Ballarat is about supporting students to realise their potential and preparing them to determine their future. The University ensures that its students are aware of the contribution they can make to the broader community so their participation in community life can be encouraged through formal and informal learning activities. The University of Ballarat recognises and rewards student achievement and is responsive to their feedback. Through its Technical Education Centre (TEC), TAFE and higher education programs, the University of Ballarat provides many points of access to its courses and programs and fosters participation in learning by a diverse range of students within and beyond the University's region. Access is enhanced through the innovative design and delivery of programs, including the application of new technologies, through flexible entry mechanisms and with exemplary levels of credit transfer for students moving between TAFE and higher education and from the TEC to TAFE. The University creates vibrant teaching and learning environments that enhance the success of students in their chosen areas of study and is responsive to the special needs of disadvantaged and disabled students. The University of Ballarat promotes cultural diversity and eliminates from its practices discrimination based on attributes including gender, race, nationality, religion or age.

Being a leader in creating and applying knowledge of international standard that is of benefit to, and has demonstrable impact on, its region and beyond. Much of the research at the University of Ballarat is applied, and the knowledge transfer occurring at the University uses the skills, expertise and innovative ideas of staff to generate significant practical and commercial benefits for its partners, and the communities it serves. The University nurtures the capabilities of its staff to develop an applied research base in areas of focused and recognised excellence. University staff publish widely in national and international journals and engage in knowledge transfer with industry.

Contributing substantially to the dynamism and vibrancy of the communities it serves. The University of Ballarat continues to develop its Technology Park, Arts Academy, and its commercial activities through its TAFE and higher education connections, its TEC, its regional campuses and its

engagement with its Indigenous communities. The University works with its communities to help them actively shape their futures rather than passively responding to imposed agendas. The University contributes to the building of a strong skill and knowledge base in its region and promotes the socio-economic, political and cultural health and wellbeing of those who live and work in its region and in the communities it serves. The University makes a major contribution to the sustainability of the region by building capacity to capture opportunity. The University has established mutually beneficial partnerships, locally and globally, that empower its endeavours. Partnerships for the University are its first recourse to support engagement with industry, the professions, business, community and Indigenous groups. The University fosters the ethical entrepreneurship in its staff. Through partnerships, the University extends and combines its own creativity with that of others; and, it accesses resources not available within the institution to achieve its ambitions for growth and engagement.

Acknowledging that its success ultimately depends on enabling its staff to realise their full potential, valuing their diversity and their particular strengths and expertise while caring about their health and well-being. The University of Ballarat continually strives to create a work environment that attracts, develops and supports outstanding and committed staff. The University recognises that to realise its full potential it must harness staff input, energy and participation in implementing its priorities. The University continues to foster in its staff positive approaches to change. The University seeks recognition as an organisation in which staff exercise leadership, are outwardly focused and actively engaged with its communities.

Ensuring that all aspects of the University are managed in a highly professional, ethical, and sustainable way. In particular, the University has an unqualified commitment to excellence - that is, it strives to improve its own performance. The University seeks to provide the best possible learning environment for its students, ensuring that its physical environment, information management infrastructure and systems and administrative services are developed and maintained with a focus on student life and the enhancement of its core functions. The University has a commitment to environmental sustainability through lowering greenhouse gas emissions and its water consumption.

It is on the basis of its charter, and the principles and objectives it enshrines, that the University of Ballarat responds to the key issues and themes in the Review of Higher Education Discussion Paper. It does so on the basis of providing observations, recommendations, vignettes and supporting evidence.

1. Characteristics of Higher Education in Australia

The University of Ballarat supports the generalised statements about the characteristics of higher education in Australia elucidated in the Discussion Paper and suggests that reference needs to be made to the Australian Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission principle that “education is now recognised as being one of the three factors, along with long life and reasonable income, that are fundamental to positive human development. Lack of access to educational opportunities, conversely, leads to economic and social marginalisation.”¹

¹ ***Universities in Crisis: Report into the Capacity of Public Universities to meet Australia's Higher Education Needs*** (2001) Senate Employment, Workplace Relations, Small Business and Education References Committee, Canberra, p.320.

One of the statement's shortcomings is that it fails to capture a vision for the future of tertiary education in Australia and provides little insight into the desired horizons for tertiary education for the nation. Such horizons would take into account the impact of knowledge boundaries blurring and how generations X and Y are seeking new and innovative ways to interface with tertiary education provision. Moreover, the generalised statements fail in acknowledging the changing balance between the public good and private gain derived from participation in tertiary education, for which there is now much evidence:

The Life Chances of Australians: the Public Good and Private Gain from Tertiary Education

... a male who has completed school earns around 27 per cent more than one that has not completed school, a male whose highest qualification is a diploma earns 47 per cent more, and a bachelors degree holder over 80 per cent more. Similarly for women, a school graduate earns 17 per cent more than an individual that does not complete school, while diploma and degree graduates earn 50 and 122 per cent more, respectively. Interestingly, women with post-school qualifications earn a higher wage premium (relative to women that did not complete school) than their male counterparts. For example, women with a post-graduate degree could expect to earn 150 per cent more than those without a high school certificate, while the corresponding premium for men is 106 per cent.²

2. Meeting Labour Market and Industry Needs

The University of Ballarat asserts that multi and dual sector universities have far more agility in responding to skill shortages and labour market signals and that this is especially the case for those that are regionally based. Multi and dual sector universities facilitate more easily the two-way flow of students between higher education and TAFE and recognise the complementarity, through credit recognition and multiple pathway arrangements, that is needed in delivering tertiary education that meets the needs of industry and the labour market. The University of Ballarat provides an exemplary model of this arrangement:

Meeting Labour Market and Industry Needs in Regional Communities

The University of Ballarat is the largest provider of industry education and training in Central and Western Victoria. With respect to vocational education:

- The training provision of the University is high quality, dynamic, flexible and responsive to industry demands. It is provided within a well-researched industry training priority framework, and is mindful of its community-service obligations in a regional environment.
- The University is a “Full Service Provider” delivering around 2.5 million student contact hours (SCH) purchased by the Victorian Government through the annual Performance Agreement negotiated with Skills Commission Victoria.
- The provision of industry training at Certificate IV, Diploma and Advanced Diploma levels comprises 45 per cent of its vocational education delivery and when combined with higher education pathways in vocational areas at degree level, the University of Ballarat is the key contributor to meeting labour market needs, industry training, and skill set development in the broad region it serves³.

3. Opportunities to Participate in Higher Education

The University of Ballarat asserts that, by any measure, the opportunities to participate in higher education are crucial to the future of the nation and especially for those who live and work in regional Australia. The geographic differences (especially between rural and

² Chapman, B, Rodrigues, M & Ryan, C. (2007) *HECS for TAFE: The Case for Extending Income Contingent Loans*, TDA, Canberra.

³ From: University of Ballarat (2008) *Response to: Securing Our Future Economic Prosperity – Discussion Paper on Skills Reform*. Submission to the Victorian State Government.

metropolitan Australia) influence the rate at which Australian students participate in higher education and these influences are significant, iniquitous and becoming greater, with rurality, socio-economic status and gender combining to produce the greatest educational disadvantage in Australia.

On average, students completing secondary education in regional and rural Australia have only a one in three chance of participating in higher education compared with their metropolitan counterparts who have a greater than one in two chance of going to university, with the trend showing that the gap is widening between rural and metropolitan Australia. Researchers from the University of Ballarat note that these issues of access are compounded due to the “precarious state of many rural communities, the decline of services, fewer transport options, disaffection of young people, youth depression and suicide, rural insecurity, low morale caused by drought and rural contraction, low incomes, unemployment, increased risk taking, drug abuse and unsafe sexual activity among the young, retreat of professionals to large towns and cities, high unemployment and poor community health.”⁴ These researchers further note that it is a “miracle” that educational outcomes in regional and rural areas are as good as they are given these circumstances. These trends are an indictment on the nation and its aspirations for equality of opportunity and equality of access.

In its time series data, the University of Ballarat has found that, for each year during the period 2003 to 2008, on average at least: 75 per cent of its domestic students belong to one or more of the established equity groups (excluding being female); 20 per cent of its domestic students are classified as low SES; and 70 per cent of its domestic students come from regional, rural or isolated areas. The University has responded to these access, participation and equity issues through a range of initiatives, largely funded from its own resources:

Examples of Access, Equity and Participation Strategies at the University of Ballarat

The University of Ballarat Rural Education Entry Program (REEP): REEP allows current VCE students from regional and rural communities to be considered for a place at the University based on their overall ability and potential to succeed, rather than just their ENTER score. One of the key benefits of this entry scheme is that regional VCE students can apply for a place at the University through their Secondary School with their application based on a report and recommendation from their School Principal. Under the REEP initiative, students are offered a provisional place at the University in early December.

Rural Outreach at the University of Ballarat: The University has established a rural outreach project with the aim of improving the participation of regional students in higher education. In 2007, the project sought to raise student aspirations about higher education, present information about university life and provide practical advice on matters such as moving away from home and student finances. Over a seven week period, the project involved 60 separate presentations in 42 regional and rural schools and was delivered to approximately 1300 students in Years 10, 11 and 12. Fifty-eight University of Ballarat students, as “ambassadors”, participated in the school visits. In addition, the project also piloted parent information sessions through regional and rural areas of Victoria.

Proving Funding Support for Regional and Rural Students: The University has had a long history of supporting students from regional and rural areas of Victoria. With the 2005 implementation of Commonwealth Learning Scholarships, the University of Ballarat provided complementary scholarships that targeted low income students and students moving from rural areas to study. The program has been reviewed and expanded after each round, and has resulted in extending the provision of University equity scholarships and the offering of 50 drought scholarships and a free computer scheme in 2007.

⁴Barry Golding, Clem Barnett, Mike Brown, Lawrie Angus and Jack Harvey (2007) *‘Everything is Harder’: Participation in Tertiary Education of Young People from Rural and Regional Victoria*, University of Ballarat, Ballarat.

The University of Ballarat Student Transition Program: The University has in place a Mentoring and Transition Program for commencing students, to enhance social networking, to break down isolation, and to assist with transition to the University by catering especially for those who are first generation university students and those from rural and isolated areas. This program includes matching every commencing student with a trained and paid student mentor, who is usually a second or third year student.⁵

4. The Student Experience of Higher Education

The University of Ballarat is one of the few Australian universities to be consistent in receiving a national ranking for the quality of its learning and teaching. For the last three years, the University of Ballarat has been placed in the top 10 of Australian universities in terms of the outcomes derived from the Learning and Teaching Performance scheme. This external attestation is reinforced by the University's own internal surveying which indicates the high value students place on their experiences at the University of Ballarat.

Despite its favourable position in terms of the quality of student experience it provides, the University suggests that one of the most deleterious consequences of the previous Government's decision to introduce voluntary student unionism has been to reduce significantly the quality of the student experience across Australian universities and especially in regional institutions. Redressing this situation should be one of the priorities from the Review and this could be done as follows:

Preserving the Student Experience in a Post-VSU Environment

In order to provide a student experience that is full and diverse, the University of Ballarat believes that Government policy should recognise:

- the importance of a vibrant commercial and services culture on campus, and the role these businesses have in both campus and community life;
- the contribution that an active social environment plays in influencing students' choice to attend university, and the role of non-academic activity in the overall university student experience;
- the role that high quality pastoral and support services have in improving retention and progression rates amongst students;
- the provision of access to these services and recognition that they form a core obligation for universities, and a core part of the university experience;
- the cost of providing these services varies heavily depending on the delivery model and nature of the student cohort, geographical location of the provider and availability or otherwise of economies of scale; and
- funding arrangements that allow the delivery of a sustainable, vibrant student experience (that does not compromise the delivery of learning, teaching and research activity), aligned with each university's mission, informed by, and consistent with the needs and aspirations of the student cohort⁶.

5. Connecting with other Education and Training Sectors

Australia's dual sector universities provide a compelling example, over more than a 10 year period, of how to achieve a greater and more effective connection between the broader education and training sectors. Although many higher education institutions offer pathways, credit arrangements and sometimes a mix of degree and VET programs, it is the dual sector universities which often have large numbers of students in higher education, VET, and a combination of both, within the one, integrated institution. There is now a strong case to be

⁵ University of Ballarat (2008) *Submission to the Victorian Parliamentary Inquiry into the Geographical Differences in the Rate in Which Victorian Students Participate in Higher Education*, University of Ballarat, Ballarat.

⁶ University of Ballarat (2008) Response to the Discussion Paper: *The Impact of Voluntary Student Unionism on Services, Amenities and Representation for Australian University Students*. Submission to the Commonwealth.

made for fostering the development of more dual sector universities in Australia. In terms of TAFE provision alone, there are currently 1.7 million students across the 57 TAFEs in Australia attending TAFE campuses in 1,400 different locations. This is almost double the number of students at university in Australia and 10 times the number of university campuses. In regional communities especially, as the University of Ballarat demonstrates, it makes good economic and educational sense to coalesce TAFE and higher education arrangements within the one, broad institutional structure. The industry partnerships, collaborations, articulation and pathway arrangements that result provide a significant pay-off to the institution and to the community. In regional and outer metropolitan communities in particular, dual sector universities have the advantage of providing a “one-stop-institution” for those seeking Certificate 1 to PhD qualifications, enhancing opportunities for significant repeat business from students as they exit with one qualification and then re-enter tertiary education at a later stage to gain further training, skills and credentials. The types of pioneering developments that can occur in dual sector universities are exemplified by the University of Ballarat:

Pioneering the Connection between Education and Training in Tertiary Education

In Victoria, the University of Ballarat, as a multi-sector institution, is pioneering developments that could be applied elsewhere in Australia. With support from the State Government, the University has established a Technical Education Centre (TEC) for year 11 and 12 students. This is a first for any Australian university. The TEC provides the opportunity for students to attend a university for their year 11 and 12 studies where the emphasis is on technical education within a tertiary education environment. Students are then able to pursue a variety of Certificate, Diploma, Degree and other pathways at the University of Ballarat.

Another first is the opportunity for TAFE students at the University of Ballarat to continue their TAFE studies through to degree level within TAFE. These students have always been able to transfer into a range of degree programs in higher education at the University with nearly one in every six students in an undergraduate degree course having already studied at TAFE or having acquired a vocational education and training qualification.

However, now TAFE students at UB have the option to continue to stay within TAFE to complete their undergraduate degree programs. These students are eligible for a Commonwealth Supported Place while they complete their degree within TAFE⁷.

6. Higher Education’s Role in the National Innovation System

The University of Ballarat is firmly of the view that redefining some of the current Australian universities as ‘teaching only universities’ is ill-conceived and lacking in vision, imagination and understanding. All Australian universities currently have a legislative mandate to engage in research and there would be little support from universities themselves, or from the broader community, for these universities to alter their mission or to amend their current Acts in response to a minority view about the efficacy of having a select number of ‘teaching only’ universities.

On the matter of research, the University of Ballarat is supportive of the “hubs and spokes” concept as articulated by current Federal Ministers, noting that the University itself has undertaken a major review of its research focus based on a contribution it might make nationally to a “hubs and spokes” arrangement. The University has focussed its research into four areas of concentration where it has national and international prominence, namely, in Informatics and Applied Optimisation, Regional Futures, Developing Capacity to Address Disadvantage and Inequity and Injury Prevention. In so doing, the University has been applauded for its efforts:

⁷ David Battersby (2008) *Dual the Success*, Campus Review, 1 April.

Senator Kim Carr Applauding Research and innovation at the University of Ballarat

As one of Australia's newest tertiary institutions, the University of Ballarat is focussed on the future, not the past. That's what I like to see. Some of the best teaching and research come out of engagement with the community. That doesn't mean they have to be narrowly utilitarian, but it does mean they should be responsive and meaningful to the university's wider constituency – the people who sustain it. Few universities understand this better than Ballarat, which has emerging applied research strengths in several areas of regional and state priority – including ICT, sports medicine, allied health, and environmental management. Teaching and research at this university are guided equally by a clear sense of what matters to the region and a strong commitment to international standards of excellence ... We are entering an era of reform and renewal in Australian higher education unlike any we have seen before. Our aim is to reverse the neglect of the recent past, and create a platform for the future. We are in for some demanding times – there is a lot of work to be done. But they will also be exciting times – and great times for a university that dares to be different.⁸

7. Australia's Higher Education Sector in the International Arena

The University of Ballarat's commitment to internationalisation is in recognition that the globalisation of universities and educational communities is occurring at a rapid pace and not to engage internationally is anathema to the concept of the modern university. The University of Ballarat has 7,500 international students from more than 40 countries and delivers quality education to these students through on-campus provision, partnership arrangements, flexible delivery systems and on an in-country basis. While this is often logistically challenging and pedagogically and administratively complex, the University seeks to honour its public statement of commitment to internationalisation which is as follows:

Statement of Commitment to Internationalisation: University of Ballarat

The University will provide equity in education by increasing participation and access to post-secondary education by international students through:

- providing access to quality education at an affordable cost;
- maximising choice; and
- recognising education as a social support and a public good.

The University will achieve its objectives on internationalisation through:

- the enrolment on-campus of international students;
- partnerships with Australian institutions to create enhanced opportunity for international students to study UB programs on-shore at metropolitan locations;
- involvement of students in study abroad and exchange initiatives and creating opportunities for outgoing student mobility;
- short course international training opportunities;
- internationalisation of the curriculum taking into consideration strategies to develop courses to make them distinctive for both local and international students;
- staff exchanges and staff conducting research internationally;
- participation in overseas assistance and aid projects;
- involvement in transnational education;
- partnerships with reputable overseas' universities, colleges and institutions to create opportunities for collaborative teaching, training and research; and
- the development of mutual recognition of qualifications internationally⁹.

⁸ Senator Kim Carr (2008). *Launch of the University of Ballarat's Explore, Discover, Apply Report*, 11 April, University of Ballarat.

⁹ University of Ballarat (2008) *International Strategic Plan (2008-2011)*. University of Ballarat, Ballarat.

8. Higher Education's Contribution to Australia's Economic, Social and Cultural Capital

The University of Ballarat has a legislative commitment, through its Act, to contribute to the economic, social and cultural capital of the region it serves. Indeed, its Act actually specifies the geographic region in which it is required to discharge its duties in this regard. The University does so willingly and considers this as one of its key objectives and part of its charter as a University. This engagement manifests itself in a range of activities: from the provision of its courses and programs to meet regional, community and industry needs; to the offering of cultural, social and educational events and functions; through to contributing significantly to the economic development of its region. Although the University is not specifically funded to pursue these endeavours, it cross-subsidises these initiatives to ensure that it is fulfilling its charter as a University. The economic contribution the University makes to its region is exemplified in the following evidence:

The Economic Contribution of the University of Ballarat to its Local Region

The University of Ballarat was established in 1994 and has campuses in central and western Victoria. The University consists of two divisions: TAFE and Higher Education, which offer a range of learning opportunities. The University plays a significant role in contributing to the regional and rural communities it serves. In addition to building skills and knowledge through teaching, the University of Ballarat hosts a range of noteworthy organisations in its Technology Park. This report estimates the economic impact of University expenditure [in 2005-06 financial year] ... on Ballarat to be \$493 million in output, \$286 million in gross regional product (GRP), \$136 million in household income and over 2,921 full-time equivalent jobs (FTE) when flow on effects are taken into account. In addition, the University generates around \$511 million in output, \$295 million in GRP, \$150 million in household income and 3,149 FTE jobs in the Central Highlands and Wimmera statistical divisions (including flow-on effects). To put these results into perspective, the University generates the equivalent of 11.8% GRP and 8.5% of employment in Ballarat and the equivalent of 5.3% GRP and 4.0% of employment in the Central Highlands and Wimmera statistical divisions.¹⁰

9. Resourcing the System

The University of Ballarat supports the introduction of whole-of-institution, mission-based compacts, which will have funding implications for dual and multi-sector universities where a proportion of their funding comes directly from the State government. Such compacts should provide universities with funding additional to their current funding agreements for teaching and research, especially to meet their community service and regional engagement functions. Support is also given to the concept of universities gaining economies of scale and entering into partnership arrangements, as has occurred between the University of Ballarat and Deakin University and the University of Ballarat and the Australian Catholic University. The resourcing of regional universities deserves special attention given the challenges they face, as the following evidence indicates:

The Resourcing of Regional Universities

In *Backing Australia's Ability*, the previous Federal Government acknowledged that higher education providers in regional areas play a "critically important role in the economic and social life of their communities which goes far beyond traditional educational activities." The Government has also recognised "the unique contribution made by regional higher education institutions and campuses to their local communities and to students from regional and rural areas." The significant barrier facing regionally headquartered universities in addressing the access issues is the higher costs they incur as a result of location, size, history, less potential to diversify revenue sources, smaller capacity to compete for fee paying students, and fewer opportunities for commercial partnerships. The 2006 Victorian Parliamentary Inquiry into *Retaining Young People in Rural Towns and Communities*, concluded that "higher education in rural and regional areas is ... relatively more expensive to provide than urban education" and that these additional costs "may be closer to 30 to 35 per cent".¹¹

¹⁰ Western Research Institute (2007) *Economic Impact of the University of Ballarat*, Western Research Institute, Bathurst, p.4.

¹¹ University of Ballarat (2008) *Submission to the Bradley Review*, July, University of Ballarat, Ballarat.

10. Governance and Regulation

The University of Ballarat supports the claim that the level of regulation and red tape imposed on universities is burdensome and expensive especially for multi-sector universities such as the University of Ballarat, which have dual reporting and compliance arrangements. Australian Universities Quality Agency (AUQA) processes have helped universities to achieve enhancements to their standards and quality assurance mechanisms. However, there have been challenges and difficulties accommodating the AUQA approach to the University of Ballarat. While having a single, mission-based strategic plan, and one governing body and academic board, the University is forced to differentiate its higher education functions from its TAFE and training functions, to comply with AUQA guidelines and review mechanisms. Achieving a unified, quality assurance approach across the University in these circumstances becomes very difficult.

The University draws the Review Committee's attention to the Victorian Government's endeavour to overhaul the State's university legislation. This is being done independent of the Review of Higher Education, highlighting the continuing disconnect between State imperatives and the Commonwealth's intentions to imprint its own governance and reporting requirements on universities. For its part, the University of Ballarat has signalled to the State government the shortcoming of its current governance arrangements in terms of its present Act, as outlined below:

Improvements Required to the University of Ballarat Act

The University of Ballarat Act contains numerous provisions whereby managerial and administrative responsibilities are not explicitly devolved down to those officers of the University who would be expected to have such responsibilities in a modern organisation. For example under the UB Act responsibility for employment of University staff rests with the University Council. In practice the Council is a peak body that cannot deal with the minutiae associated with staffing the University. Various formal and informal delegations are necessary to ensure that appropriate officers handle such issues. The Act should be amended to ensure management and administrative responsibilities are clearly and transparently allocated to the appropriate level of management within the University.

The University of Ballarat Act contains restrictions on the management of the University's finances and assets which are inappropriate for a modern tertiary institution. Many of these restrictions are convoluted and achieve little. Indeed sound business practices are hindered by some of the provisions in the Act. For example the restrictions on University participation in limited companies are verbose, unduly complex, and ultimately easily avoided by a determined administrator. The restrictions on dealing with land are confusing and may be unduly restrictive. The Act should be amended to remove or simplify such restrictions¹².

Concluding Statement

The University of Ballarat encourages the Review Committee to be brave in its determination to develop a blueprint for tertiary education in Australia that is enduring, principled and visionary. At a time when there is considerable public scepticism about the cost, efficiency and political objectivity of Government sponsored reviews, there is an opportunity to re-establish trust with the people of this nation through this present review. This can be done by addressing the key access, equity, participation and funding issues that have bedevilled tertiary education over the decades and which have led to a muted, and at times disheartening response from the public, to the importance of tertiary education to the future of this nation.

¹² University of Ballarat (2008) *Submission to the Victorian Government on the Review of University Acts*, University of Ballarat, Ballarat.