



Australian Government

Indigenous Higher Education Advisory Council

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Dear Ms Chadwick

Submission to Review of Regional Loading

Since its inauguration in 2005, the Indigenous Higher Education Advisory Council (IHEAC) has provided policy advice to Government on improving outcomes in higher education for Indigenous students and staff relating to their participation, retention and progression both in study and in employment.

The Council, now in its third term, reports to both the Minister for Education, Employment and Workplace Relations and the Minister for Minister for Innovation, Industry, Science and Research. The Council welcomes the opportunity to provide input into the *Review of Regional Loading*.

The content of this submission was discussed at the 15th IHEAC meeting on 22 and 23 February 2010 and endorsed by myself as Council Chair via electronic communications.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Steve Larkin'.

Professor Steven Larkin
Chair

15 March 2010

Indigenous Higher Education Advisory Council Submission to the Review of Regional Loading

Key Recommendations:

The Indigenous Higher Education Advisory Council (IHEAC) recommends that 10 percent of the total annual Regional Loading Allocation be allocated to ensure Indigenous students in regional and remote areas receive an equitable level of support.

The Funding Model and Guidelines for Regional Loading Provision must ensure the distinct needs of Indigenous students are met.

In its recent submissions to DEEWs discussion papers *'Measuring the Socio-economic Status of Higher Education Students'* and *'An Indicator Framework for Higher Education Performance Funding'*, IHEAC recommended that a specific Indigenous indicator be included in the Socio-Economic Status (SES) measure being developed by Government, and that mandatory Indigenous student and staff targets must be explicitly named in the performance funding framework and included in university Compacts.

In its submission to the development of the *Higher Education Participation and Partnership Program (HEPPP) Guidelines*, IHEAC stated:

"In 2008 Indigenous students represented just one percent of undergraduate commencements¹, despite forming 2.4 percent of the total Australian population. To address this and ensure concrete action towards closing the gap, IHEAC believes that, as well as including an Indigenous-specific indicator in SES measurement, 10 percent of a university's HEPPP 'Participation Component' should be allocated to programs that target the specific needs of Indigenous students."

At my recent presentation to the Universities Australia Higher Education Conference I reiterated Council's strong view that Indigenous participation and outcome targets needed to be embedded in University Compacts, and that Indigenous Australians must be recognised as having a distinct status as First Nations people rather than being regarded as just another equity group.

The Government's commitment to seeing 20 per cent of higher education enrolments at the undergraduate level filled by people from low socio-economic backgrounds by 2020, should result in an increase in Indigenous students in regional and remote campuses.

Thus IHEAC recommends 10 percent of the total annual Regional Loading Allocation be allocated to ensure Indigenous students studying in regional and remote areas receive an equitable level of support, and appropriate staff support frameworks can be developed.

The issues paper refers to a number of funding model options for regional loading. Council asserts that the funding model and guidelines for Regional Loading Provision must recognise the distinct needs of Indigenous students.

This could occur in a number of ways, such as through a portion of the total fund being allocated to competitive grants that reward good practice in Indigenous higher education including programs targeted to local needs, or through funding the achievement of performance targets which would include Indigenous student and staff targets.

¹ See '2008 Full Year Student Summary tables - All Higher Education Providers' in *Students: Selected Higher Education Statistics (2009)*, Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations, 2009, available online at: <http://www.deewr.gov.au/HigherEducation/Publications/HEStatistics/Publications/Pages/2008FullYear.aspx> >

A demand-driven formulaic allocation based on characteristics of the student grouping might include an Indigenous indicator. A considerable weighting would need to be given to the Indigenous indicator given Indigenous students comprised 1.2% of all domestic students in 2008. A population parity weighting might be considered (jurisdictional or national). If calculated on a national level, for example, this would result in a 2.5 times loading per Indigenous student (parity rate was 3.05% in 2008).