Governance of Higher Education Institutions in Australia

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Australia’s Higher Education Sector

- Diverse higher education sector, including:
  - 37 public universities
  - 3 private universities including 1 Australian branch of an overseas university
  - 4 self accrediting providers
  - ≈ 150 other higher education providers approved by State and territory legislation

- ≈ 720,000 domestic students
  - 75% are undergraduate
  - 60% study full-time

- ≈ 230,000 overseas students
  - 57% are undergraduate
University Characteristics

- Largely autonomous
- Established under their own legislation (usually State and Territory)
- Responsible for their own academic standards
- Quality audited by Australian Universities Quality Agency (AUQA)
Recent reforms in Higher Education

- *Higher Education at the Crossroads* review paper:
  - Released in 2002
  - Stimulated discussion and debate on various issues across the sector
• Package of higher education reforms announced in May 2003

• Approx $AU11 billion in additional funding to sector over 10 years

• Package included an additional $AU2.6 billion over four years
Higher Education Reform Principles

• Prohibitions removed on domestic postgraduate fee paying arrangements
• Additional population growth places annually from 2007 - 1,400 new places in 2007 $10.9m in 2007
Quality

- The Quality Assurance Framework
  - The Australian Qualifications Framework (AQF)
  - The Australian Universities Quality Agency (AUQA)
  - Includes review of governance

- The Learning and Teaching Performance Fund

- The Carrick Institute for Learning and Teaching in Higher Education
Equity and Diversity

Equity
- Higher Education Loan Programme (HECS-HELP, FEE-HELP and OS-HELP)
- Commonwealth Learning Scholarships
- Disability and equity programmes
- Indigenous Higher Education Advisory Council
- Indigenous Staff Scholarships
- Indigenous Support Fund

Diversity
- Higher education sector to offer a range of institutions servicing different communities and varied requirements
- National Protocols for Higher Education Approval Processes
  - Accredit own courses
  - Access to a University title
- Guidelines for Overseas higher education institutions seeking to operate in Australia
Sustainability

- Increased funding to support the higher education sector
- National Governance Protocols
  - *Building Better Foundations* discussion paper
- University Governance Professional Development Programme
- Higher Education Workplace Relations Requirements (HEWRRs)
- Workplace Productivity Programme
- AUQA review
Overall governance of Universities

Concerns about governance arrangements in Australian universities:

- Complex relationships
- Tendency for many members to represent interest groups
- Unwieldy size of some governing bodies; and
- Doubts about the ability to monitor effectively universities’ commercial operations
National Governance Protocols

Protocols cover a range of matters, including:

- responsibilities to clarify the role of the governing body;
- duties of members and sanctions for their breach to outline standards of conduct members are expected to follow, and the removal of members who do not meet those standards;
- a process for election and nomination in accordance with skills and expertise from which only three office-holders are exempt;
- a limit of 22 members on the size of the governing body;
- conditions relating to length of service and to the appointment of members of parliament to give an opportunity for new members;
- a requirement that some members have financial and commercial expertise;
- provision for induction programmes and professional development of members;
- a requirement for codified grievance procedures, release of an annual report; and
- minimum standards for the oversight of commercial operations.
Assessment of Governance Protocols

• Universities’ compliance of the Protocols has been assessed in 2004 and 2005.

• All universities were found to be either compliant, or compliant subject to their completing implementation of changes arising from legislative amendment before 30 September 2006.

• The compliance assessment entails an examination of whether required actions have been taken and criteria have been met. It cannot measure behaviours and the extent to which good practices have been embraced.

• While some universities have gone well beyond the minimum requirements of the Protocols, others appear to have done just what is necessary in order to comply.
University Governance Professional Development Programme

Based at the University of Canberra

Programme to assist universities to develop “best practice” in their governance arrangements, through:
- induction for new governing body members;
- professional development training;
- a web site for sharing of better practice;
- an annual conference; and
- studies and investigations.
Higher Education Workplace Relations Requirements (HEWRRs)

- Driven significant reform
- Provide a major funding incentive for greater workplace relations reform within universities
- HEWRRs cover five main subject areas:
  - choice in agreement making;
  - direct relationships with employees;
  - workplace flexibility;
  - productivity and performance; and
  - freedom of association.

Australian Workplace Agreement (AWA)
- An individual written agreement between an employer and employee that sets out terms and conditions of employment
Workplace Productivity Programme

• Commences 2006
• Encourage higher education institutions to further progress workplace reform to increase workplace productivity
• $83.3 million available between 2006 and 2008
• Initial priorities are the review and reform of financial and operational arrangements

• Future priorities include:
  • review of human resource practices;
  • professional development;
  • reform through mergers, amalgamations
  • assessment of the consequences of VSU
Further information

• Higher education reforms
  http://www.backingaustraliasfuture.gov.au
    • Crossroads
    • Backing Australia’s Future

• Overview of higher education in Australia