Equity in Higher Education Policy Forum Agenda

30 April – 1 May 2013

Holme Building, Science road, University of Sydney

Day 1 – Tuesday 30 April 2013

Time	Topic
8.15am	**Registration, tea and coffee**
9.00am	**Welcome to Country**
9.15am	**Opening Address** *Minister Sharon Bird, Minister for Higher Education and Skills*
9.45am	**Housekeeping and Introduction** *Craig Ritchie, General Manager Indigenous and Equity Branch*
10.00am	**Conversation 1 - The objective of equity policy in higher education**
10.30am	Morning Tea
11.00am	**Conversation 1 - - The objective of equity policy in higher education *continued***
11.30am	**Conversation 2 - Who should benefit from equity interventions?**
12.30pm	Lunch
1.30pm	**Conversation 2 - Who should benefit from equity interventions? *continued***
2.00pm	**Conversation 3 - Towards A Performance Measurement Framework For Equity In Higher Education** *Presentation - Dr Fadwa Al Yaman, Group Head - Australian Institute of Health and Welfare*
3.00pm	Afternoon Tea
3.30pm	**Conversation 3 - Towards A Performance Measurement Framework For Equity In Higher Education**
4.50pm	**Wrap up of Day 1**
5.00pm	Pack up and walk down to Drinks
5.15pm	**Social Drinks at Nicholson Museum**

Day 2 – Wednesday 1 May 2013

Time	Topic
8.30am	Tea and Coffee
9.00am	**Welcome and Recap**
9.10am	**Equity Student Experience** *Presentation - Jade Tyrell, President National Union of Students*
9.20am	**Conversation 4 - Developing a Critical Interventions Framework for advancing equity in Australian higher education** *Presentation - Professor Richard James - Pro Vice-Chancellor (Participation and Engagement), University of Melbourne*
10.30am	Morning Tea
11.00am	**Conversation 4 - Developing a Critical Interventions Framework for advancing equity in Australian higher education *continued***
11.45am	**Conversation 5 - Efficient, effective and appropriate program design** *Presentation - Emeritus Professor Rob Castle, Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Academic*), *University of Wollongong*
12.30pm	Lunch
13.30pm	**Conversation 5 - Efficient, effective and appropriate program design *continued***
3.00om	Afternoon Tea
3.30pm	**Conversation 6 - Where to from Here**
4.30pm	**Final thoughts** David deCarvalho, Head of Division, Higher Education

Australian Government

Department of Industry, Innovation, Climate Change, Science, Research and Tertiary Education

BACKGROUND PAPER

Equity in Higher Education Policy Forum

30 April and 1 May, 2013

Contents

Overview

The Australian Government believes that all Australians with the ability and desire to undertake higher education should be provided with the opportunity to do so. Ensuring equality of opportunity to participate in higher education is pivotal in building and enhancing Australia's human capital and to developing a highly skilled workforce. Policy interventions have been put in place to encourage and support people from groups that are currently under-represented in the population of domestic students to attend university. These under-represented groups include people from low socio-economic (low SES) backgrounds; people from regional and remote areas; people with disabilities; and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.

This paper is intended to provide a background to discussions at the Equity in Higher Education Policy Forum to be convened by DIICCSRTE on 30 April and 1 May 2013. Special focus is given in this document to students from low SES backgrounds and students with disabilities but other groups under-represented in our higher education system are also considered. The paper

1. contains a brief overview of the history and development of equity policy
2. outlines the present equity environment
3. outlines factors currently shaping the higher education sector
4. provides information about the possible future aims, shape and design of equity policy and programs.

Aims and scope of the forum

Tackling equity issues is a key component of the Australian Government's plan for a fairer Australia and it fundamental to higher education reform. In *Transforming Australia's Higher Education System* the Government set out an agenda for increasing participation by people from low SES backgrounds in higher education and is making substantial investments towards this. The equity policy framework that guides much of the activity in universities is *A Fair Chance for All*, which is now over 20 years old. It is timely to begin work on a new equity policy framework that focuses activity on evidence-based solutions and better aligns equity work in universities with the broader higher education contribution to the Government's productivity agenda.

The Equity in Higher Education Policy Forum will bring together university leaders, researchers and equity practitioners and will mark the beginning of a consultation process on a future equity policy framework for higher education. The Forum is not designed to be a conference but a workshop with focused conversations on a range of key policy issues around equity in higher education. The outcomes of the Forum will provide input for consideration by the Government on these issues.

The package of papers prepared for the forum includes:

1. The *Background Paper*
2. Two papers that summarise work to date on two projects commissioned by DIICCSRTE:
    a) *Towards a Performance Measurement Framework for Equity in Higher Education*, a summary of a project conducted by the Australian Institute of Health and Welfare
    b) *Developing a Critical Interventions Framework for Advancing Equity in Australian Higher Education*, a project conducted by the University of Melbourne
3. A paper on indicators of socioeconomic status, *Moving to an Enhanced Indicator of Higher Education Students' Socio-economic Status*
4. A paper outlining *Common Equity Principles Expressed by Universities*.

This background paper introduces ideas about possible changes which could be considered when shaping ongoing equity policy and programs, particularly the Higher Education Participation and Partnerships Program and the Disability Support Program.

It should be noted that some current equity programs (e.g., the Commonwealth Scholarships Program and the Indigenous Support Program) are being considered separately as part of the Australian Government's response to the 2012 Review of Higher Education Access and Outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and are not included for discussion here. Similarly, the Enabling Loading under the Commonwealth Grant Scheme is not included here.

History and development of equity policy

In 1990, *A Fair Chance for All* identified six equity groups of interest in Australian higher education and defined equity objectives, targets, and strategies. The six groups were: people from low socioeconomic backgrounds (low SES); people with a disability; Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people; people from rural and isolated areas; people from a non-English speaking background (NESB); and women in non-traditional areas of study and higher degrees. Developments in equity policy since 1990 are summarized in Table 1.

Table 1: Summary of milestones in equity policy in higher education, 1988–2009.

1988	*Higher Education: A Policy Statement* (White Paper) Released by the Minister for Education, the Hon John Dawkins MP, the paper stated that the Australian Government intended to promote greater equity in higher education by developing a national overview of equity problems; developing national objectives; facilitating the identification, implementation and monitoring of progress towards institutional equity goals; providing additional funds for equity programs; guiding institutions, and reviewing Commonwealth programs.
1990	*A Fair Chance for All* The discussion paper defined the overall national equity objective for higher education, identified six equity groups requiring particular support, set national equity objectives and targets for each of these groups, presented a range of strategies to assist institutions and set out the responsibilities of the Commonwealth and institutions.
1991	*Report of the Higher Education Performance Indicators Research Group* Established in 1989, the Higher Education Performance Indicators Research Group reported that the collection and analysis of data required to generate indicators should be undertaken by the Commonwealth in cooperation with higher education institutions and that the indicators should be published annually.
1994	*Equity and General Performance Indicators ('Martin Indicators') in Higher Education* Included the development of operational definitions of the six equity groups described in *A Fair Chance for All* and the creation of indicators used to monitor the performance of these equity groups (access, participation, success and retention).

1996	*Equality, Diversity and Excellence: Advancing the National Education Equity Framework* Report requested by then Minister for Employment, Education and Training (the Hon Simon Crean MP) to assess progress towards *A Fair Chance for All*. The report set out 26 recommendations, but a change of government impacted on implementation.
2002	*Crossroads Review of Higher Education* The review's main finding for equity policy was that students from disadvantaged backgrounds remained under-represented in higher education. Led to a package of policy reforms announced by then Minister for Education, Science and Training, The Hon Brendan Nelson MP
2003	*Backing Australia's Future* Introduced a range of new equity-related funding streams and programs including scholarships programs, the Indigenous Support Fund and the Indigenous Higher Education Advisory Council.
2008	*Review of Australian Higher Education* The Government initiated a review of higher education ('Bradley Review') to examine the future direction of the higher education sector, its fitness for purpose in meeting community and economic needs, and the options for ongoing reform. The Review was conducted by an independent expert panel, led by Emeritus Professor Denise Bradley AC. The Government's response was *Transforming Australia's Higher Education System.*
2009	*Transforming Australia's Higher Education System* As part of the 2009 Budget, the Government announced it would provide an additional $5.4 billion over four years in a comprehensive response to the Bradley Review, with reforms to impact on the scale, potential and quality of the nation's universities. The reforms put participation in the centre, with an equity target for 20 per cent of higher education enrolments at the undergraduate level to be from people of a low SES background by 2020.

In 2008 the Australian Government established a Review of Australian Higher Education, chaired by Emeritus Professor Denise Bradley. As part of its work, the Review examined equity outcomes in higher education.

The Bradley Review found that significant progress had been made in improving the access and participation of some previously underrepresented groups. Women, for example, were participating in higher education at a higher rate than were men, although they still remained under-represented in higher degree research programs and in some non-traditional areas such as engineering and information technology. The Bradley Review also found that good progress had been made in improving participation for students with disabilities, although the level was still below the groups' population share, and that the proportion of students from non-English speaking backgrounds (NESB) in the population of domestic students was broadly consistent with their population share.

But the Bradley Review also found that progress had not been nearly as great in increasing the participation in higher education of people from low SES backgrounds and recommended that the government focus on this group as well as on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and on people from regional and remote areas.

Transforming Australia's Higher Education System (2009) was the Australian Government's response to the Bradley Review. In that paper the Government announced its intention to increase the

participation of students from low SES backgrounds in higher education to 20 per cent of all domestic undergraduate students by 2020.

To facilitate increased access to and participation in higher education for this group, the Australian Government announced the Higher Education Participation and Partnerships Program (HEPPP) as part of the 2009–10 Budget. HEPPP aims to help universities to undertake activities that raise the aspirations and capacity of students from low SES backgrounds to participate and succeed in higher education and to also to assist universities to provide the additional services that low SES students may require. Other Australian Government responses to the Bradley Review included (a) establishing a Review of Higher Education Access and Outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and (b) introducing new student income support arrangements from 2010 that provide targeted financial support particularly to students from regional and remote areas. The Australian Government, through the Higher Education Disability Support Program, has also directed funding support towards assisting people who have a disability to participate in higher education.

It is now more than five years after the Bradley Review and it is timely to consider what has been achieved so far and where there are opportunities to ensure a stronger future for under-represented groups in Australian higher education.

Present Context

Participation targets and equity indicators

The access and participation objectives of the Australian Government are that:

- by 2020, 20 per cent of undergraduate enrolments should be students from low socio-economic backgrounds;
- people with disabilities will be able to engage with, and benefit from, higher education
- parity for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students and staff is achieved over time;
- by 2025, 40 per cent of all 25 to 34 year olds will hold a qualification at bachelor level or above.

It is worth noting that the current Australian Government target for low SES is expressed in terms of a proportion of the total undergraduate domestic student population. Simply increasing the number of low SES students attending university might not meet this target—minimally what is needed is a rate of growth of low SES undergraduate enrolments that exceeds the rate of growth of all domestic undergraduate students.

These objectives are supported through the HEPPP, the DSP, and a number of programs targeting the needs of Indigenous Australians in higher education. All of these objectives are supported indirectly though the Commonwealth Grant Scheme and, in particular, through the demand driven funding of students in bachelor level courses.

Currently, five indicators are frequently used to track change in outcomes for equity groups:

- *Access* (i.e., the number of equity group students commencing university as a proportion of all commencing domestic students)
- *Participation* (i.e., the number of equity group students enrolled as a proportion of all domestic students enrolled)
- *Retention* (i.e., the number of equity group students re-enrolling at an institution in a given year as a proportion of the domestic undergraduate students who were enrolled in the previous year, minus those students who have completed their course)

- *Success* (i.e., for the equity group, the number of units passed within a year as a proportion of the total units in which they were enrolled); and
- *Completions* (i.e., the number of students in an equity group who complete a course in a given year as a percentage of completions by all domestic students).

Current programs addressing equity in higher education

The major Australian Government higher education equity programs are listed in Table 2. The table contains a brief description of the aim of each program and a statement of its budget. Although the Equity in Higher Education Policy Forum is not chiefly concerned with Indigenous programs, these have been included for the sake of completeness and for comparison purposes.

Table 2: Aims of current Australian Government programs to address equity in higher education.

Program	Budget
Indigenous Support Program (ISP) The ISP makes grants to higher education providers to help them to meet the special needs of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students.	$37.4 million in 2012
Away from Base (AFB)* AFB for 'mixed mode' delivery provides funding support for Indigenous students to undertake VET or higher education studies while still residing in their home communities.	$23.6 million in 2011
Commonwealth Scholarships Program (CSP) The objective of the CSP is to facilitate choice in higher education and increase higher education participation for Indigenous students by providing scholarships. There are five types of scholarships.	$12.8 million in 2012
Indigenous Tutorial Assistance Scheme—Tertiary Tuition (ITAS-TT)* ITAS-TT provides for up to two hours of tutorial support per subject per week for Indigenous undergraduate students in some circumstances.	$8.2 million in 2011
Indigenous Staff Scholarships (ISS) The ISS program makes available five scholarships in each calendar year. The objective of the program is to develop Indigenous leadership in the higher education sector.	$0.18 million in 2012
Higher Education Participation and Partnerships Program (HEPPP) The HEPPP is the flagship program designed to help the higher education sector increase the percentage of undergraduate students from low SES backgrounds.	$168.4 million in 2012
Higher Education Disability Support Program (DSP) The DSP has three components, two of which are directly related to student support: • Additional Support for Students with Disabilities (ASSD) • Performance-based Disability Support Funding (PDSF) ASSD funds universities to provide educational support or equipment to students with a disability. The PDSF encourages universities to attract and support domestic students with a disability.	≈ $7.26 million in 2012
National Disability Coordination Officer Program (NDCO)* The NDCO aims to assist people with a disability to access, and participate in, higher education or VET and subsequent employment. The program maintains a network of regionally-based NDCOs who work to influence local stakeholders.	$4.25 million in the 2012-13 financial year

**** Not funded under HESA***

What the data tells us

During the decade to 2011, total domestic university domestic enrolments grew by an average of 2.6 per cent annually, from 678 036 in 2001 to 875 913 in 2011. Similarly, commencing student numbers grew from 255 732 in 2001 to 340 429 in 2011, or 2.9 per cent annually. It is against this background that changes in the proportional enrolment of equity groups should be viewed. In particular, where

an equity group has maintained a constant proportion of total enrolments over the decade, the absolute number of students enrolling from that equity group must have grown at the same rate as total enrolments (i.e., 2.6 per cent annually). Of course, what we are hoping for is that the representation of each equity group in the student population will not simply remain steady, but will increase, as a result of current policy interventions, towards parity with the representation of the equity group in the (student-aged) population as a whole.

How have we been doing? Figures 1 and 2[1] show the changes in equity group representation, as a proportion of commencing domestic students (*access*) and as a proportion of all total students (*participation*) during the period 2001–2011.

From the figures it can be seen that the standout success has been the increase in participation of students with disabilities. In 2001, they represented 2.65 per cent of commencing students but by 2011 they represented 4.25 per cent. Alternatively, the absolute number of students with a disability has grown twice as fast as that of the student body as a whole.

The story regarding Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students is more complex. Enrolments of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students, both as a proportion of commencing students and of all domestic students, have shown a slight trend upwards since around 2006, but have remained relatively steady at around 1.5 per cent when considered over the decade 2001–2011. On the positive side, the steady proportion means that the growth in absolute numbers of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students has kept pace with the growth in total student numbers. This is a significant gain, given the dramatic rate of increasing domestic enrolments. The downside has been that interventions to increase the enrolment rates of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students beyond those of domestic students have not yet had the desired effect.

The picture with students from low-SES backgrounds is also complex and trends in their participation and access must be considered in the context of increasing domestic student numbers. From 2001–2005 the proportional representation of low SES students in the population of higher education domestic students was in decline, but since 2005 low-SES access and participation have been increasing steadily. In 2010 participation equalled that in 2001 and is now above the 2001 level.

Some caveats ought to be put in place when interpreting the data regarding access and participation for the equity groups. Decreasing trends in regional and remote student participation have to be considered in the context of the possibility of shifting demographics, for example, a shift of student-aged population away from regional and remote Australia into the cities could account for this trend. Decreasing trends in women enrolling in non-traditional areas might be an artefact of growth in (male) enrolments in some areas (e.g., IT), rather than a trend maintained across all non-traditional areas. Finally, there might at first sight appear to be a small downwards trend in NESB student participation but this observed difference across the decade is well within the observed year-to-year variation in participation and access for NESB students.

[1] Figures 1 and 2 are based on data provided by Higher Education Student Statistics, DIICCSRTE. Note that the equity groups are not mutually exclusive and a student can be counted in more than one equity group, e.g., a student can be counted as being both a person with a disability and having a low SES background.

Figure 1

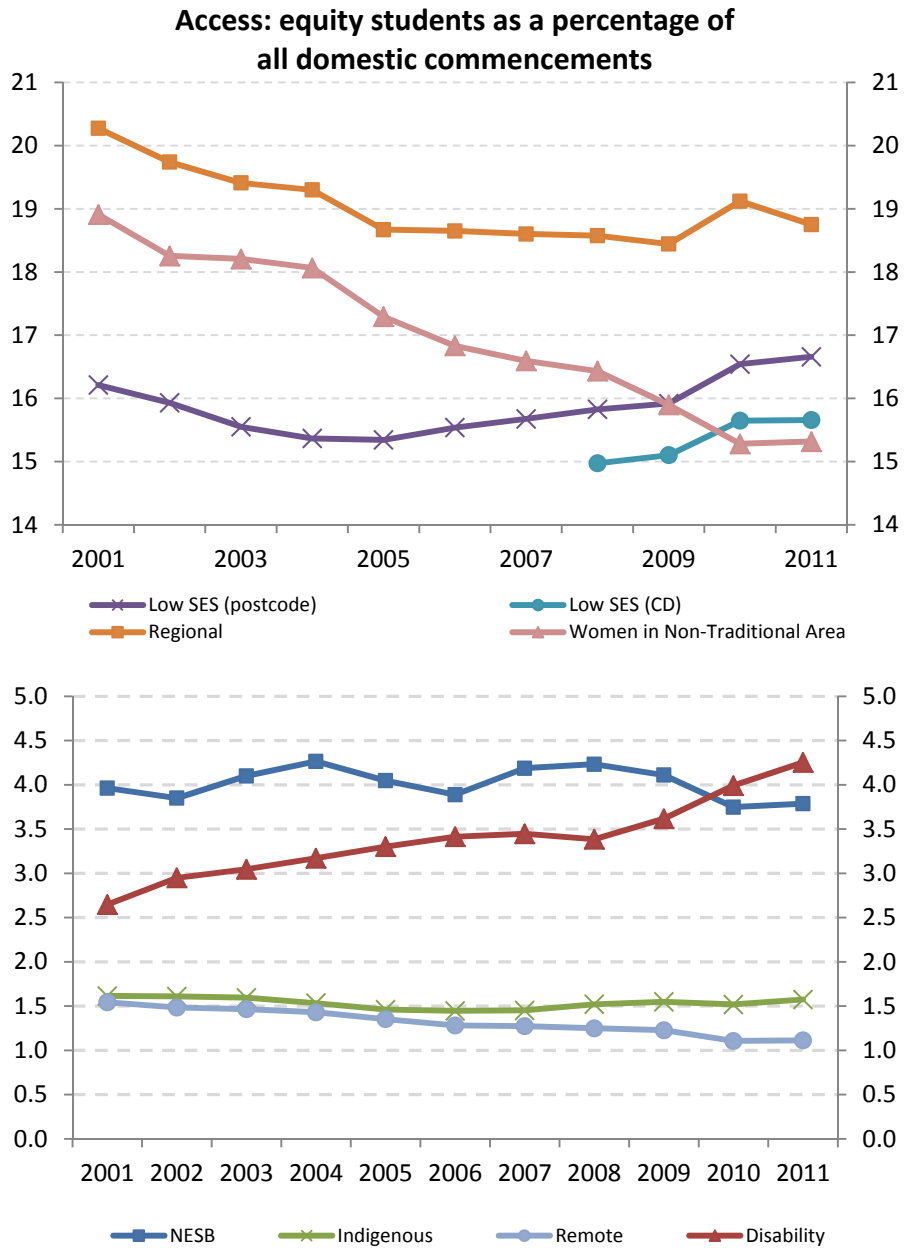
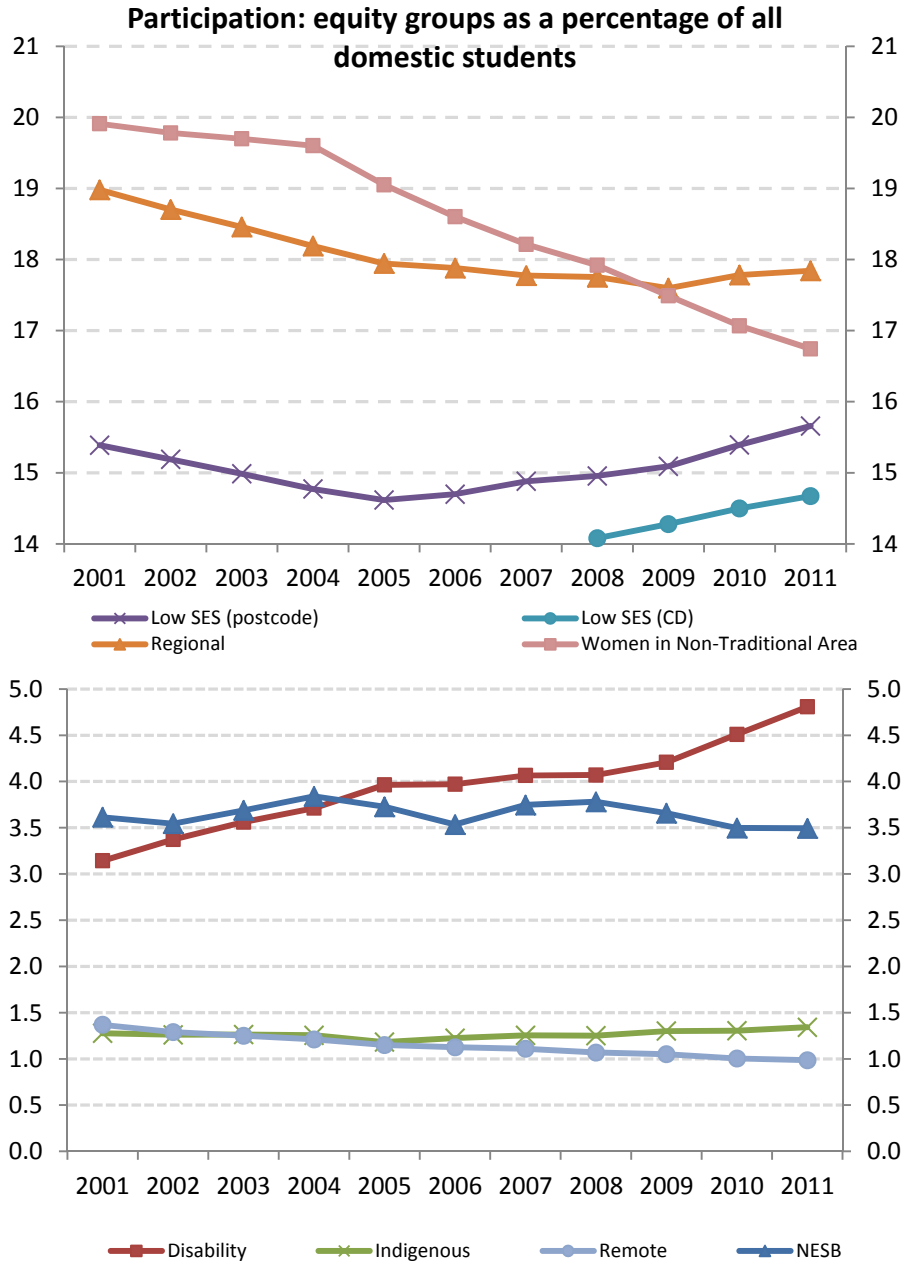

Access: equity students as a percentage of all domestic commencements
21
20
19
18
17
16
15
14
2001
2003
2005
2007
2009
2011
Low SES (postcode)
Low SES (CD)
Regional
Women in Non-Traditional Area
5.0
4.5
4.0
3.5
3.0
2.5
2.0
1.5
1.0
0.5
0.0
2001
2002
2003
2004
2005
2006
2007
2008
2009
2010
2011
NESB
Indigenous
Remote
Disability

Figure 2



Progress towards the 20 per cent low SES target

In 2009 the Australian Government announced its intention to increase the participation of students from low SES backgrounds in higher education to 20 per cent of all domestic undergraduate students by 2020. How are we going in achieving this target?

Table 3 (over page) shows the number of undergraduate low SES students, the total number of undergraduate domestic students, and the percentage participation of low SES students for 2001–2011. Table 3 confirms what can be seen from Figure 2, namely that the rate of participation of low SES students in undergraduate studies must still grow substantially if the Government's 2020 target is to be met.

Table 3: Participation of low SES students, enumerated on the basis of postcode. Participation is calculated as the number of low SES students enrolled in undergraduate courses, expressed as a percentage of all domestic students enrolled in undergraduate courses.

	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011
Number of low SES (postcode) undergraduates	104,336	106,805	106,374	104,362	103,156	105,908	110,695	113,442	120,652	130,069	137,151
Number of domestic undergraduates	678,036	703,204	709,832	706,500	705,743	720,504	743,924	758,553	799,531	845,002	875,913
Participation (percentage)	**15.4**	**15.2**	**15.0**	**14.8**	**14.6**	**14.7**	**14.9**	**15.0**	**15.1**	**15.4**	**15.7**

Based on data provided by Higher Education Student Statistics, DIICCSRTE.

Current program structures and limitations

The Australian Government's current equity programs are tightly aligned with particular equity groups—the HEPPP focuses on low SES access and participation; the DSP focusses on funding to support the educational needs of students with disabilities. In both the HEPPP and the DSP funding is paid to directly to universities and the programs have no flexibility to support other organisations that could contribute to achieving the Government's policy aims.

Higher Education Participation and Partnerships Program (HEPPP)

The aim of the HEPPP is to provide supplementary funding to universities so that they can improve access to, and participation in, undergraduate courses for people from low-SES backgrounds and to improve the retention and completion rates of those students. The possible range of HEPPP-funded activities in which universities may engage is broad since universities are free to determine their own activities, subject only to the very broad requirements of the Other Grants Guidelines.

HEPPP is structured around two funding streams:

- *Participation* funds distributed via formula reflecting an institutions share of low SES population. The Participation Component (Component A) aims to increase the participation in higher education of current and prospective students from low-SES backgrounds;
- *Partnerships* funds, which has two sub-components:
    - the *Partnerships baseline funding* is a grant made to each institution, and
    - *Partnerships projects funding* which is allocated to universities through a competitive grants process.

  The Partnerships Component (Component B) aims, though effective outreach and related activities with appropriate stakeholders, to encourage of people from low-SES backgrounds to participate in higher education.

HEPPP is administratively complex and providers are given little detail regarding the way that they are expected to use their funds and the outcomes being sought. In theory, the current Other Grants Guidelines should allow the development of responses which are tailored to local circumstances. In reality the effect appears to have been a diverse range of activities with equally diverse impact. Other problems with the program include that:

- HEPPP funding began in 2010. From Figures 1 and 2 it can be seen that the data since then show little evidence of a dose-response curve which would reflect this increased injection of funds.
- The HEPPP annual reports do not provide a sufficient basis on which to assess which interventions used by universities work better than others.
- HEPPP funding is being spent in unanticipated ways, including on projects which fall outside the Guidelines.

Options for program reform are discussed in a subsequent section of this paper.

Higher Education Disability Support Program (DSP)

The DSP has three components of which two are directly related to student support:

- The Additional Support for Students with Disabilities (ASSD) is a retrospective payment which provides a partial reimbursement of the cost of educational support services and/or equipment for students with disabilities who have high cost needs.
- Performance-based Disability Support Funding (PDSF) is paid on the basis of an institution's share of the total number of students with a disability enrolled at universities, weighted by success and retention.

- The Australian Disability Clearinghouse on Education and Training (ADCET) is an information and resource website to promote inclusive teaching and learning practices for students with a disability. ADCET is hosted by the University of Tasmania.

The objective of the ASSD is to fund universities to provide educational support or equipment to students with a disability. Under the ASSD, universities receive funding for students they have assessed as having a disability and who have received educational support related to their disability. The amount of the ASSD grant paid to a university for a student is a proportion of the amount actually spent.

The objective of the PDSF is to encourage universities to attract and support domestic students with a disability. The PDSF component comprises the DSP funds which remain after the other two allocations have been made. These remaining funds are distributed to universities in proportion to the fraction of the national total of students with a disability who are enrolled at each institution. The fraction received by each institution is adjusted for its retention and success ratios for this group. PDSF funds must be spent on activities which attract and support students with a disability.

The DSP has seen only minor reforms since its inception. Over the intervening period major changes have occurred in equity and disability in Australia. The most notable changes have been the 2011 Productivity Commission inquiry into *Disability Care and Support* in Australia and the subsequent development of the National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS). The Productivity Commission was well aware that education was a relevant issue for equity and for people with disabilities and saw education and employment being among the major complementary services with which the NDIS would interface:

> *Disability exacerbates disadvantage. People with a disability and their carers often also experience low levels of income, educational attainment, employment, superannuation, health and wellbeing*. (p. 7)

Like the HEPPP, the DSP is also administratively complex. Other problems with the program are that:

- An increasing share of the DSP funding is exhausted under the ASSD component leaving less available for PDSF each year.
- It is not yet clear how or if the DSP should interface with the NDIS.
- The program lacks a policy framework that integrates targets, funding and services for students with disabilities in higher education.

Options for program reform are considered in a subsequent section of this paper.

Positioning policy and programs for the future

At the heart of the Australian Government's higher education policy is the desire to expand participation in higher education and so prepare the Australian workforce for future economic conditions. The Government aims to provide more people with the opportunities that result from completing a higher education qualification, while at the same time ensuring that higher education institutions continue to supply both high quality education and student experience. The Government's central policy position has not changed.

Yet despite this unchanging policy-focus, higher education is currently experiencing massive change—change that looks likely to continue for the foreseeable future. In this section we list some of the drivers of these changes. In the subsequent section we consider the opportunities and risks these changes might create for equity in higher education. Much of this material is speculative in nature; our aim in presenting it is to facilitate discussion during the forum of how best to future-proof higher education equity policy and programs. Finally we return to considering HEPPP and DSP and present some possibilities for what reform might look like for these two programs.

Drivers of change

Some of the drivers for change which might provide risks and opportunities for equity outcomes are listed below.

Political

- Introduction of the demand-driven system.
- Impact of the efficiency dividend and other funding changes.
- Establishment of TEQSA.
- The need for evidence of 'what works' and a growing emphasis on evidence-based policy and evidence-based programs.
- Balancing aspiration and attainment/success.

Technological

- The penetration of hand held computing devices into teaching and learning, e.g., the use of ipads and iphones to provide immediate feedback to and from students.
- Social media—their role in research, and, both positively and negatively, in teaching (e.g., distributed study-buddy groups; assignments-written-for-you 'services').
- Massive open online courses—it is too early to assess the impact of MOOCs on universities, but it is likely that they are here to stay.

Financial

- Boom and bust cycles in Australian commodities.
- Budget position

Cultural

- Shifting expectations in the community regarding the balance between the private and community gain from individual higher education and who should pay for it.
- Shifting expectations of students and parents of students regarding what a university education should entail and what it should prepare graduates for.
- Shifting expectations on the part of employers regarding what skills graduates should have.

Options for program reform

The Australian Government's current equity programs are tightly aligned with particular equity groups—the HEPPP focuses on low SES access and participation; the DSP focusses on funding to support the educational needs of students with disabilities. In both the HEPPP and the DSP funding is paid to directly to universities and the programs have no flexibility to support other organisations that may contribute to achieving the Government's policy aims. In addition to the relatively inflexible nature of these two programs, a number of higher-order problems exist. These higher-order problems are summarized in Table 4.

Table 4: Summary of current higher-order problems in equity in higher education.

Lack of policy coordination and integration	Reporting issues	Data issues	Problems in the Guidelines
• There is a lack of coordination of equity policies, programs and targets; especially with regard to the extent of overlap between the various target populations. • There is relatively little integration between equity policy and the equity targets that are negotiated in university Compacts.	• Each university prepares multiple equity reports which do not reference each other and do not necessarily link to equity targets specified in its Compact. • University reports of their program activities frequently do not include sufficient data to allow for the evaluation of programs as a whole, or to assess which types of interventions work better than others.	• Many of the programs are poorly placed to evaluate 'what works' as their design and data collections do not allow the program's causal role in bringing about change to be assessed. • Counts of Indigenous students, and of students with a disability, are based solely on a student's self-identification; this is known to be subject to social influences which can decrease (or increase) the likelihood of identification.	• There are a number of drafting problems and omissions in the Other Grants Guidelines.

HEPPP

The general problems mentioned above are relevant for HEPPP, as are the specific problems discussed earlier. How do we improve HEPPP in the future? The following list of options is not meant to exhaustive. The options for program reform include:

1. Maintaining the status quo with minimal changes to program guidelines.
2. Abolishing the separate Participation and Partnerships funding pools.
3. Revising the requirements for university reporting of HEPPP activities to improve the quality and comprehensiveness of the reports.
4. Revising the Guidelines to include a set of well-described activities to which university HEPPP-funded activities are restricted.

One way to strengthen the HEPPP would be to underpin it with a selection of evidence-based critical interventions and a framework of measurement indicators against which program performance could be assessed.

Two projects have been undertaken for the Department. One project, under taken by the University of Melbourne, deals with the development of a set of evidence-based interventions to which HEPPP-funded activities could be restricted. The second project, undertaken by the AIHW, deals with the development of a measurement framework for equity in higher education. Work on both these projects is continuing and the outcomes to date will be presented during the forum.

Desirable qualities in a new model of HEPPP

If a new model of HEPPP were to be introduced then the goal posts for that model could include that it:

- allows for greater program flexibility
- reduces the administrative burden on providers
- is underpinned with a robust performance measurement framework which enhances accountability and transparency
- is more substantially based in evidence about what works.

Potential Options for a model of HEPPP

Option 1 – Make no changes to the current components of the program

Option 2 – In addition to a national priorities pool, retain two separate funds one for partnerships allocated on a competitive basis and one for participation allocated based on a formula

Option 3 – In addition to a national priorities pool, retain two separate funds for partnerships and participation that are allocated based on a formula

Option 4 - In addition to a national priorities pool, maintain one fund that is allocated based on a formula that can be used for partnerships or participation activities.

Diagrams of Options 2 – 4 are below.

Option 2 — Retain two separate funds, one for partnerships allocated on a competitive basis and one for participation allocated based on a formula.

Program Structure	**Participation** Allocated based on a formula	**Partnerships** Allocated based on a competitive process
Program Activities	**Critical interventions framework** Draws on evidence about good practice in equity interventions at multiple points in the student journey. Used to inform deployment of HEPPP money.	
Program Performance	**Performance measurement framework for equity in higher education** Contains measures of student-level higher education outcomes including graduate outcomes; precursors to higher education (e.g., aspiration, school attendance); and higher education system performance (e.g., access; retention; success; and equity-focussed interventions).	

Option 3 — In addition to a national priorities pool, retain two separate funds for partnerships and participation but allocate funds based on a formula.

Program Structure	**Participation** Allocated based on a formula	**Partnerships** Allocated based on a formula
Program Activities	**Critical interventions framework** Draws on evidence about good practice in equity interventions at multiple points in the student journey. Used to inform deployment of HEPPP money.	
Program Performance	**Performance measurement framework for equity in higher education** Contains measures of student-level higher education outcomes including graduate outcomes; precursors to higher education (e.g., aspiration, school attendance); and higher education system performance (e.g., access; retention; success; and equity-focussed interventions).	

Option 4 — In addition to a national priorities pool, maintain one fund that is allocated based on a formula that can be used for partnerships or participation activities.

Program Structure	**Participation and Partnerships** Allocated based on a formula
Program Activities	**Critical interventions framework** Draws on evidence about good practice in equity interventions at multiple points in the student journey. Used to inform deployment of HEPPP money.
Program Performance	**Performance measurement framework for equity in higher education** Contains measures of student-level higher education outcomes including graduate outcomes; precursors to higher education (e.g., aspiration, school attendance); and higher education system performance (e.g., access; retention; success; and equity-focussed interventions).

DSP

The general problems mentioned above are relevant for the DSP, as are the specific problems discussed earlier. How do we position the DSP for the future? Options for reform include the development of a national framework which would:

- Consider the extent of overlap between target equity populations, particularly low SES and students with disabilities, improve targets and potentially integrate funding into a less administratively burdensome method of distribution.
- Develop integrated targets, funding, and services for higher education students with disabilities
- Develop possible policy interfaces between the DSP and the NDIS.

Alternatively, and more broadly, integration of the DSP into a national framework for disability interventions in higher education, VET and employment could be undertaken. Such a framework could provide targets for the participation of people with disabilities in tertiary education and employment.

Any consideration of program reform should also consider whether DSP funding should be paid directly to students rather than universities.

What does the future hold for equity?

If we are to future-proof equity policy and programs we must engage in predicting what that future might bring and in thinking about where we want to get to. We want to encourage a student-centred, whole-of-university, approach to equity. We hope that the following list of questions and topics will provide grist for thought and prediction at the Equity in Higher Education Policy Forum.

1. **What should equity in higher education mean?**

   What should *equity* mean in higher education in the future? There are tensions between models of equity based on ideas about equal opportunity, merit, positive discrimination, and fairness. An examination of university websites reveals examples of these tensions—universities have various statements which do not all sit together consistently, e.g.:

   - The University seeks to provide opportunities for students and staff from underrepresented or disadvantaged groups to reach their full potential.
   - The University will ensure that the appointment and advancement of staff and the admission and progress of students are based on merit.
   - The University aims to take every opportunity to recruit, appoint, develop and promote staff from equity groups, at all levels including the most senior, and across all of its teaching, research and administrative areas and to improve access, participation and success of students from disadvantaged backgrounds.
   - The University will provide fair opportunities for both staff and students.

2. **Equity for whom?**

   Which equity groups should be in focus? For example:

People from a low SES background	First in family
People with disabilities	Refugees
Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people	Prisoners
Mature-aged learners	Unemployed people
Early school leavers and those with low educational attainment	People who are members of multiple equity groups (e.g., people who are Indigenous AND disabled AND low SES)
People who have limited access to computer technology and related skills	People employed in industries experiencing a downturn e.g., people employed in the automotive industry

3. **Does the higher education system break or reinforce the cycle of inequity?**

   Does the demand-driven system work for equity groups? Is it too early to tell? Do students from equity groups (for example, low SES students) generally have a more disjointed educational journey than students who are not from equity groups? If so, should we focus our efforts more on supporting students making a disjointed journey rather than on removing barriers to access?

4. **How do we measure higher education equity outcomes?**

   Are there aspects of system performance (in addition to access, participation, retention, success and completions) which would be sensitive indicators of equity performance in a demand-driven system such as we now have? Are there variables which might act as 'canaries in the mine' and give early warning of future downturns in equity performance?

5. **What risks and opportunities do new technologies create for equity?**

   What factors driving change in higher education pose risks to or opportunities for achieving equity outcomes? Do new technologies and technological developments (e.g., MOOCs, social media) provide opportunities for improving equity outcomes?

6. **How do we balance aspiration against likely success?**

   Would a realistic approach to extending university participation be to grow aspirations and capabilities hand-in-hand? How could we go about encouraging aspiration while balancing this with a realistic assessment of likely attainment or success?

7. **If HEPPP were to continue what should it look like?**

   Should we retain the current structure? Should there be a national priorities pool of funding? Should there be a reward component in the formula? Should it be purely formula driven? Should it focus on low-SES alone or other equity groups?

8. **How do we decide who is an equity student?**

   How should we identify low SES students? How should we identify students with disabilities?

9. **How can we build an evidence-base for what works?**

   How do we balance the need to use evidence-based interventions against the need to try new and innovative approaches? How can we build interventions so that their effectiveness and efficiency can be investigated?

10. **How should we support/ scaffold a higher education policy to ensure effective implementation?**

Australian Government

Department of Industry, Innovation, Climate Change, Science, Research and Tertiary Education

COMMON EQUITY PRINCIPLES EXPRESSED BY UNIVERSITIES

Equity in Higher Education Policy Forum

30 April and 1 May, 2013

Contents

Summary of general equity principles

The following table summarises the equity principles extracted from university statements. Some equity principles overlap. In places tensions can be observed between different approaches adopted across universities. Where tensions between approaches can be observed a number of summary positions have been provided to represent these.

Social justice and human rights
The University supports human rights and social justice and believes that all people have inherent dignity and the right to be treated equitably.

Ethical behaviour
The University values honesty, integrity and ethical behaviour and practices.

Lawfulness
The University recognises that all staff and students have the right to a learning and working environment that is free from discrimination, sexual harassment and victimisation. The University will eliminate all direct and indirect discrimination and will meet the requirements of State and Federal equal opportunity and anti-discrimination legislation.

University culture
The University will foster a culture which is supportive of equity and diversity within the staff and student body.

Responsibility and reach of policy
1. Responsibility for equity is shared by all members of the University community and will be promoted at all levels and across all domains of university activity.

OR

2. Equity is the responsibility of all managers and decision makers and will be promoted at all levels and across all domains of university activity.

Value of difference
Differences among members of the University are respected and valued.

Skill sets particularly valued
Understanding and knowledge of other cultures and cross-cultural skills will be highly regarded in all new appointments and ongoing training.

Equal opportunity
1. The University seeks to provide opportunities for students and staff from underrepresented or disadvantaged groups to reach their full potential.

OR

2. The University will ensure that the appointment and advancement of staff and the admission and progress of students are based on merit.

OR

3. The University aims to take every opportunity to recruit, appoint, develop and promote staff from equity groups, at all levels including the most senior, and across all of its teaching, research and administrative areas and to improve access, participation and success of students from disadvantaged backgrounds.

OR

4. The University will provide fair opportunities for both staff and students.

Diversity of students and staff
The University seeks to increase the proportion of students and staff from diverse social and cultural contexts.

Use of inclusive language
The University aims to ensure that all its publications, official documents and teaching materials use inclusive and non-discriminatory language.

Dispute resolution
The University will provide mechanisms to resolve complaints of discrimination or harassment.

General nature of inclusive practices
1. The range of needs of staff and students are best met by the use of inclusive practices and the provision of reasonable adjustments where required.

OR

2. Staff and students have the right to determine for themselves whether they require special consideration for their particular needs.

Inclusive practices/orientations within research and teaching
The University aims to foster and develop curricula that are inclusive and research programs which make contributions to multiculturalism and national social inclusion challenges.

Consultation
The University will consult when appropriate with staff and students and their recognised associations.

Analysis of general equity policy principles expressed by universities

Aim of this paper

To analyse the documents available on Australian university websites and extract commonly held, general equity principles used by universities to inform their equity and related policies.

Outcomes of the analysis

A search was conducted of the website of each Australian university and documents which contained statements of equity principles were identified. The parts of those documents dealing with general equity principles were extracted and analysed. (The extracts are presented in the Appendix.) The equity principles which were identified as being supported by a number of universities are listed in the table (over page). Statements of equity principles have been aggregated together where the sense of the various statements appears to be the same, or to significantly overlap. The list of universities supporting a particular equity principle is not exhaustive.

Other observations

- All universities have documents on their websites which deal with aspects of equity
- But these documents vary on:
  - Where they are placed on the websites, and hence in the ease with which they can be found and the profile which the documents have
  - The level of detail covered (e.g., policies regarding the types of changes to exam conditions which can be used for students with disabilities versus statement of broad and abstract equity principles which will be used to inform all university policies)
  - The extent of integration of the policy documents, for example some universities have many documents on a variety of aspects of equity (e.g., students with disabilities; Indigenous students; breastfeeding and health; student accommodation; equal opportunity; cultural diversity; teaching and learning curriculum development; etc) while others have developed policy documents which aggregate equity issues to a greater extent, but consequently also often provide fewer details
  - Many universities do not have a single document which expresses their equity principles. Those universities which have many detailed documents sometimes do not have a single document that expresses the equity principles underlying the positions that the institution has taken (although those equity principles can be inferred to some extent from their existing documents)
  - Equity statements from NSW universities differ from those of others. The *NSW Anti-Discrimination Act 1977* covers discrimination in employment and education on the grounds of sex (including, breastfeeding and pregnancy), race, marital and domestic status, disability, homosexuality, age, transgender status, and carers' responsibilities and requires NSW universities to report annually on specific groups who have experienced disadvantage. These designated groups are: Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, people with a disability, people from non-English speaking backgrounds and women. Presumably because of this Act the NSW universities have a greater emphasis on some topics than is observed nationally, the stand-out example being policies on breastfeeding on campus.

Points where universities disagree

There are some tensions between some of the principles. These tensions are most obvious in the statements regarding

- Equal opportunity
  Ideas about merit, positive discrimination and fairness inform the idea of equity which is expressed, but do not necessarily lead to consistent positions.
- The general nature of inclusive practices
  The extent to which services should be self-determined by individuals and groups, and the extent to which inclusive practices versus residual services are useful, are issues about which there is not across-the-board consensus
- Who has responsibility for equity
  Is responsibility for equity something every member of the university community shares, or does it lie with university management?
- Skill sets particularly valued
  This might be better considered as part of a University's employment policy rather than an ethical principle.
- Consultation
  The extent to which universities believe that students and staff should be consulted possibly differs across institutions—this can be inferred from the fact that only a small number of universities have explicit statements regarding consultation. It is not clear that this is a point which should be covered under equity policy. For staff, some university enterprise bargaining documents could contain explicit agreements about consultation, so this might be better considered as an industrial relations issue. For students, agreements with the student union at each university might already cover this point.

Outcomes: General equity principles

The following tables show the equity principle extracted from university statements. Some of the equity principles overlap. Where tensions are observed between the statements a number of summary positions have been provided to represent these.

Social justice and human rights

The University supports human rights and social justice and believes that all people have inherent dignity and the right to be treated equitably.

EXAMPLES OF STATEMENTS	EXAMPLES OF SUPPORTING UNIVERSITIES
The University will support social justice and human rights	Monash; ANU; Victoria
All people have inherent dignity and the right to be treated equitably	Deakin; UTas

Ethical behaviour

The University values honesty, integrity and ethical behaviour and practices.

EXAMPLES OF STATEMENTS	EXAMPLES OF SUPPORTING UNIVERSITIES
The University values honesty, integrity and ethical behaviour and practices	QUT

Lawfulness

The University recognises that all staff and students have the right to a learning and working environment that is free from discrimination, sexual harassment and victimisation. The University will eliminate all direct and indirect discrimination and will meet the requirements of State and Federal equal opportunity and anti-discrimination legislation.

EXAMPLES OF STATEMENTS	EXAMPLES OF SUPPORTING UNIVERSITIES
The University will meet the requirements of State and Federal equal opportunity and anti-discrimination legislation	JCU; UWA; USQ
The University will promote excellence in educational outcomes for all students, regardless of characteristics such as sex, race, age, marital or family status, sexual orientation, impairment or religious beliefs	ECU; JCU; Macquarie; QUT; ANU; Melbourne; UWS
Eliminate direct and indirect discrimination on the grounds of sex, marital status, pregnancy, or potential pregnancy, parenthood or family responsibilities; race, colour, nationality or national or ethnic origin; disability, handicap or impairment, age; religious or political belief or activity; lawful sexual activity; trade union activity; or any other personal attribute irrelevant to the work or study to be performed	JCU; USQ; USC; UWS; Victoria
All members of the University have the right to a learning and work environment that is free from discrimination, sexual harassment and victimisation	Deakin; JCU; QUT; SCU; Swinburne; UWA; Ballarat; UNSW; UTas; USC; UWS; Victoria
The University aims to provide a safe, supportive and healthy working environment which supports work/life balance	QUT

University culture

The University will foster a culture which is supportive of equity and diversity within the staff and student body.

EXAMPLES OF STATEMENTS	EXAMPLES OF SUPPORTING UNIVERSITIES
The University aims to provide staff and students with an environment that is safe, flexible, fair, culturally appropriate, friendly and professional	Swinburne; Flinders; UQ; UNSW
Promote the development of a University culture which is supportive of equity and diversity within the staff and student body	JCU; Monash; QUT; Flinders; USQ; UWS
Provide a diverse, flexible and creative study and work environment which acknowledges, supports, values and encourages cultural diversity and assists in the development of understandings of and insights into a range of cultures	ACU
Provide a teaching, learning and working environment that values cultural and linguistic diversity, fosters mutual respect and cultural competence and responds to diverse needs	Victoria

Responsibility and reach of policy

3. *Responsibility for equity is shared by all members of the University community and will be promoted at all levels and across all domains of university activity.*

OR

4. *Equity is the responsibility of all managers and decision makers and will be promoted at all levels and across all domains of university activity.*

EXAMPLES OF STATEMENTS	EXAMPLES OF SUPPORTING UNIVERSITIES
Responsibility for equity is shared by all members of the University community	Griffith; UQ; UTas; UWS
It is the responsibility of all managers and decision makers to ensure that educational equity is integrated in all matters of policy development, forward planning and performance review within the University	USQ;
Equal opportunity considerations must be integrated into university processes and practices at all levels	UTas
The University aims to promote social inclusion at all levels and across all of its teaching, research, administration and community engagement	Deakin; Griffith; Ballarat; USQ

Value of difference

Differences among members of the University are respected and valued.

EXAMPLES OF STATEMENTS	EXAMPLES OF SUPPORTING UNIVERSITIES
Differences among members of the University are respected and valued	Deakin; Griffith; Macquarie; Swinburne; Flinders; Melbourne; UWA; Ballarat; UNSW; USQ; UTas; UTS; USC; UWS; Victoria
Recognize and value the multicultural nature of Australian society and of the University community	ACU

Skill sets particularly valued

Understanding and knowledge of other cultures and cross-cultural skills will be highly regarded in all new appointments and ongoing training.

EXAMPLES OF STATEMENTS	EXAMPLES OF SUPPORTING UNIVERSITIES
Understanding and knowledge of other cultures and cross-cultural skills will be highly regarded in all new appointments and ongoing training	USQ
To make use of the cultural capital brought to the University by the staff and students from diverse cultural and language backgrounds in order to achieve the University's mission	USQ

Equal opportunity

5. *The University seeks to provide opportunities for students and staff from underrepresented or disadvantaged groups to reach their full potential.*

OR

6. *The University will ensure that the appointment and advancement of staff and the admission and progress of students are based on merit.*

OR

7. *The University aims to take every opportunity to recruit, appoint, develop and promote staff from equity groups, at all levels including the most senior, and across all of its teaching, research and administrative areas and to improve access, participation and success of students from disadvantaged backgrounds.*

OR

8. *The University will provide fair opportunities for both staff and students.*

EXAMPLES OF STATEMENTS	EXAMPLES OF SUPPORTING UNIVERSITIES
To enable all staff and students to reach their potential irrespective of background or personal circumstances	CQU; Deakin; QUT; USQ; Victoria
To ensure that all people have equal opportunity to access and participate in University activities	Ballarat
The University seeks to provide opportunities for students and staff from underrepresented or disadvantaged groups	Monash; ANU; UNSW; UWS
Facilitate the contribution and successful participation within the University, its courses and activities, of students and staff from diverse cultural backgrounds	ACU
The University will ensure that the appointment and advancement of staff and the admission and progress of students are based on merit	JCU; ANU; USC (staff only)
The University aims to ensure that the best students are admitted irrespective of their means and circumstances	Monash;
The University aims to take every opportunity to recruit, appoint, develop and promote staff from equity groups, at all levels including the most senior, and across all of its teaching, research and administrative areas	Deakin; JCU; Macquarie; Monash; QUT; SCU; ANU; Melbourne; UWS
The University aims to take account of the impact of previous educational disadvantage	Deakin; SCU; UNSW; USQ; USC
The University aims to improve access, participation and success of students from disadvantaged backgrounds	Monash; SCU; ANU; UNSW; USQ; USC; Victoria
University policies will include special measures (additional services or special conditions) which are only available to identified equity groups, or persons with particular attributes, where there is justification for doing so on the basis of past or current disadvantage and inequity	USC
The University will work in partnership with the community to achieve social inclusion by encouraging participation in all levels of education, especially by people from previously excluded groups	Victoria
Fair access to educational opportunities at the University	Victoria
Fairness in the provision of University services and programs to students	Victoria
Fair opportunities for successful participation of students in University programs and services	Victoria

Diversity of students and staff

The University seeks to increase the proportion of students and staff from diverse social and cultural contexts.

EXAMPLES OF STATEMENTS	EXAMPLES OF SUPPORTING UNIVERSITIES
The University aims to have a student profile which represents the diversity of the Australian community	Deakin; ECU; UQ; Ballarat
The University seeks to increase the proportion of students and staff from diverse social and cultural contexts	Melbourne; UQ

Use of inclusive language

The University aims to ensure that all its publications, official documents and teaching materials use inclusive and non-discriminatory language.

EXAMPLES OF STATEMENTS	EXAMPLES OF SUPPORTING UNIVERSITIES
The University aims to ensure that its publications and official documents use inclusive and non-discriminatory language	Deakin; JCU
All teaching and learning environments, academic practices and language are non-discriminatory	USQ; Victoria

Dispute resolution

The University will provide mechanisms to resolve complaints of discrimination or harassment.

EXAMPLES OF STATEMENTS	EXAMPLES OF SUPPORTING UNIVERSITIES
The University will provide mechanisms to resolve complaints of discrimination or harassment	JCU; UWA; Ballarat; USC; UWS; Victoria
The University will attempt to redress any unfair, discriminatory or illegal practices which may result or have resulted directly or indirectly from cultural difference, identity and/or context	ACU

General nature of inclusive practices

1. *The range of needs of staff and students are best met by the use of inclusive practices and the provision of reasonable adjustments where required.*

OR

2. *Staff and students have the right to determine for themselves whether they require special consideration for their particular needs.*

EXAMPLES OF STATEMENTS	EXAMPLES OF SUPPORTING UNIVERSITIES
The range of needs of staff and students are best met by the use of inclusive practices and the provision of reasonable adjustments where required	Deakin;
Inclusive practices are usually more effective and less discriminatory than residual services that target the needs of particular groups	UTas
Staff and students have the right to determine for themselves whether they require special consideration for their particular needs	UTas

Inclusive practices/orientations within research and teaching

The University aims to foster and develop curricula that are inclusive and research programs which make contributions to multiculturalism and national social inclusion challenges.

EXAMPLES OF STATEMENTS	EXAMPLES OF SUPPORTING UNIVERSITIES
The University aims to foster and develop curricula and research programs that are inclusive and draw on diverse knowledge and experiences	Deakin; USQ
Inclusive pedagogies are demonstrated across all disciplines	UQ; USQ
Enhance the quality of students' learning through the provision of culturally, socially and gender inclusive education in areas such as curricula, teaching methods, assessment and review provisions, written and audio-visual material and support services;	UNSW; USQ
Enhance research and engagement contributions to national social inclusion challenges	Melbourne
Research investigation into cultural diversity, multiculturalism and specific needs of staff and students from diverse backgrounds will be encouraged	USQ

Consultation

The University will consult when appropriate with staff and students and their recognised associations.

EXAMPLES OF STATEMENTS	EXAMPLES OF SUPPORTING UNIVERSITIES
Consult when appropriate with staff and students and their recognised associations	JCU
Course content reviews and evaluations consider the need for equitable access and participation and ensure that students are able to contribute to these processes	USQ
The University will provide opportunities for genuine participation in decision-making for students	Victoria
Promote clear and accountable educational and management policies and practices to engender trust between managers, staff and students	UNSW

Appendix: Extracts used in the analysis

Central Queensland University

From CQUniversity Annual report 2011—page 26

CQUniversity is committed to the principles of social inclusion and widening participation. CQU will provide broad access pathways to Higher Education to help students reach their educational potential. We will increase the representation and success of students through opportunities and services, no matter what their educational, cultural and family background, or their country of origin.

Deakin University

One of Deakin University's six core commitments is to 'equity and access for individuals and groups who might not otherwise enjoy the benefits that flow from participation in higher education'.

The University's Strategic Plan includes the goal:

"To champion higher education equity and access in the broader community; to be an exemplar of an inclusive organisation committed to the principles of social justice and fair treatment of its members; and to ensure that Deakin's teaching, research and services address the diversity of the Australian and Deakin University communities and enable all staff and students to realise their potential irrespective of background or personal circumstances."

From Deakin's Equity and Diversity Policy

University activities are underpinned by the following principles:

a. all people have inherent dignity and the right to be treated equitably
b. differences among members of the University are respected and valued
c. all members of the University have the right to a learning and work environment that is free from discrimination, sexual harassment and victimisation
d. the range of needs of members of the University are best met by the use of inclusive practices and the provision of reasonable adjustments where required.

The University aims to:

a. build a University community in which all members of the University are able to realise their full potential and participate in all aspects of University life
b. foster an inclusive and vibrant culture for students and staff that respects and values diversity
c. provide an environment free from discrimination, sexual harassment and victimisation
d. implement inclusive policy, practices and programs in all its activities, including services and facilities
e. broaden its student profile to be more representative of the diversity in the Australian community and to recognise the impact of previous educational disadvantage
f. take every opportunity to recruit, appoint, develop and promote staff from equity groups, at all levels and across all of its teaching, research and administrative areas

g. foster and develop curricula and research programs that are inclusive and draw on, and advance, diverse knowledge and experiences, and implement inclusive practices in all activities, including services and facilities
h. promote social inclusion; for example, by partnering with other sectors and community-based organisations, to increase access to and promote success in learning and employment
i. use its best endeavours to ensure that the University's publications and official documents use inclusive and non-discriminatory language.

Edith Cowan University

From ECU Equity Statement of Commitment

The University promotes excellence in educational outcomes for all students, regardless of characteristics such as sex, race, age, marital or family status, sexual orientation, impairment or religious beliefs. The University endeavours to reflect within its student population the diversity of the community.

Students from diverse backgrounds are encouraged to work with the University to shape ECU's culture across its teaching and research programs, services and policies to ensure that equity and diversity are embedded in all University practices. …

The University attempts not only to improve equity within the University, but also to stimulate positive equity outcomes in the broader community through its graduates, partnerships and community engagement.

ECU works to ensure that its graduates have key attributes including ethical behaviour and international and cultural awareness.

Griffith University

Griffith University, Equity And Diversity Plan 2011 – 2013
PRINCIPLES:

- Social inclusion is intrinsic to all aspects of University life. Equity, diversity and social inclusion will be expressed in teaching, research, service and community engagement at all levels.
- Staff and students, regardless of background or intrinsic characteristics, will feel that their contribution is welcomed, valued and supported.
- Responsibility for the achievement of equity goals and targets is shared by all members of the University community.

GOALS:

3.1 To respond effectively to, and be progressively transformed by, increased equity and diversity in all aspects of the University's operations. 1
3.2 To enhance the University's diversity, relevance and responsiveness to local and global communities by further developing the range and reach of Griffith's external community partnerships.
3.3 To consistently underline the significance and raise the visibility of the University's commitment to this Equity Plan and the principles underlying it, both internally and externally.

James Cook University

Equal Opportunity Policy and Procedures

James Cook University is committed to promoting equal opportunity in employment and education and to ensuring freedom from all forms of discrimination as determined by legislation and by University policy. This commitment to equity and justice is consistent with the University's mission of achieving and maintaining excellence.

In order to meet its obligations, and demonstrate its commitment, James Cook University aims to:

- Promote equal opportunity in all University activities;
- Promote the development of a University culture supportive of diversity and of equity principles;
- Create an environment where staff and students are able to work and study free from discrimination and harassment;
- Comply with State and Federal laws, and eliminate direct and indirect discrimination on the grounds of sex, marital status, pregnancy, or potential pregnancy, parenthood or family responsibilities; race, colour, nationality or national or ethnic origin; disability, handicap or impairment, age; religious or political belief or activity; lawful sexual activity; trade union activity; or any other personal attribute irrelevant to the work or study to be performed;
- Provide mechanisms to resolve complaints of discrimination and harassment;
- Take steps to advance the status of women through the Equal Opportunity for Women in the Workplace Act (1999) and of other people from equity groups, including Indigenous Australians, people from non-English speaking backgrounds, and people with disabilities;
- Ensure that the appointment and advancement of staff and the admission and progress of students are based on merit;
- Use non-discriminatory and inclusive language in all documents and formal activities and encourage its use in classes;
- Advance, in management and educational policies and practices, reflection of and respect for the social and cultural diversity of the University and the community of Northern Queensland;
- Consult as appropriate with staff and students and their recognised associations.

Macquarie University

Macquarie University Annual Report 2011—page 27

Macquarie University is a vibrant, diverse and innovative university, committed to social inclusion and equality of opportunity in employment and education.

Social Inclusion is concerned with creating an accessible and fair university which recognises, values and celebrates the diversity of students and staff.

Monash University

Monash University Annual Report 2011

Social Inclusion: Priority: To provide opportunities from students and staff from underrepresented groups

Social Responsibility: Priority: To support social justice and human rights

Social Inclusion Strategy

The University's Social Inclusion Strategy was developed to

- improve access, participation and success of students from disadvantaged backgrounds
- build a more inclusive environment so that students and staff with a disability have the opportunity to access and participate at all levels
- increase Indigenous employment and education
- improve the performance in the area of gender equity by creating an organisational culture that is inclusive and in which female staff participate equally at all levels

Monash University seeks to improve the human condition … through a commitment to social justice … [and] the very best [students] will be admitted irrespective of their means and circumstances. (Monash 2025)

Queensland University of Technology

From QUT Equity and You At a Glance

Central to the University's goals are:

- positive support for the cultural and social diversity within the staff and student body,
- an education and work environment free from all forms of discrimination and harassment, and
- QUT graduates who possess a sense of community responsibility.

Guiding the University in its social justice efforts is a broad base of equity policies. These aspirations are translated into actions and strategies in documents like the QUT Blueprint and cover all areas of activity: learning and teaching, research and innovation, people and culture, finance and infrastructure.

Priority objectives in the University's strategic planning include:

- dealing with student poverty as a barrier to university study,
- increasing respect for cultural diversity within the University community, and
- promoting reconciliation between Indigenous and non-Indigenous people.

But, surely treating people equitably means treating them all the same, right? Wrong—but, this is a common misconception. We don't all start from the same point—many individuals (and groups) experience social disadvantage that creates barriers to their success. So, to give everyone a fair chance to achieve to their full potential, QUT provides assistance to particular groups and individuals. The aim of that assistance is equity for all.

From QUT Blueprint 3—page 10

QUT values:

- scholarship, learning and achievement in all student and staff endeavours
- engagement with and responsiveness to our diverse internal and external communities

• social justice and equal opportunity in education, employment and research, and a particular emphasis on strategies which enable Indigenous Australians to achieve excellent educational outcomes

• a safe, supportive and healthy working environment which supports work/life balance

• honesty, integrity and ethical behaviour and practices

• a spirit of experimentation, innovation, entrepreneurialism and responsive and reliable client service.

QUT has been guided by a Reconciliation Statement adopted in 2001 and an Indigenous Education Strategy to make explicit our commitment to improving educational outcomes for Indigenous Australians and addressing Indigenous issues in teaching and research. This Blueprint reaffirms these commitments and renews our strategies for making progress towards them.

Southern Cross University

Southern Cross University Equity and Diversity Plan 2011–2015

We will improve the access, participation and success rates of students from all equity groups through a whole-of-University approach to outreach and engagement activities, alternative entry pathways and a supportive student learning environment.

Goal 1: We will improve the access, participation and success rates of students from all equity groups through a whole-of-University approach to outreach and engagement activities, alternative entry pathways and a supportive student learning environment.

Goal 2: We will strive for a diverse workplace that has in place sustainable strategies to support and promote our staff in equity groups.

Goal 3: We will provide an inclusive environment for our students and staff that supports and embraces a knowledge of, and respect for, equity and diversity and is free from harassment and discrimination.

Swinburne University

Equal Employment Opportunity and Diversity Policy

PRINCIPLES

The University is guided by the principle of equal opportunity in all of its activities. The University aims to create a positive and equitable work and study environment, where productive learning and research can take place. This includes providing staff and students with an environment that is safe, flexible, fair, culturally appropriate, friendly and professional. Equity principles are a core element of the planning, recruitment, interview, selection and appointment of new employees of the University.

The University celebrates the diversity of its community and recognises the rights and responsibilities of all its members. It is critical to the achievement of our business goals that we have a culture which respects, values and actively pursues the benefits of the diversity we have at the University.

The University is committed to an equitable and inclusive study and work environment free from discrimination and harassment. The University has implemented policies and procedures to promote a discrimination and harassment free work environment for all staff to ensure that they are able to work effectively and fully participate in all aspects of University life.

The Australian National University

Equal Opportunity Policy

Policy statement

3. ANU will continue to integrate the principles of equal opportunity in its planning, policies and practices that advance the distinctive nature and purpose of ANU.

4. ANU will promote inclusive work and study environments that value the diversity of backgrounds and perspectives of the University community. This means that ANU will continue to apply the purpose of equal opportunity and human rights legislation and policy:

· to improve access, participation and inclusion of particular equal opportunity groups who have been traditionally under-represented, through review of policy and practices and implementing special measures; and

· to eliminate discrimination on the grounds of sex; pregnancy; marital status; family responsibility; race, colour, ethnic or ethno-religious background, descent or national identity; sexuality; age; trans-sexuality; disability; union affiliation, political conviction or religious belief.

Equal opportunity at ANU

5. Equal Opportunity means that staff and students experience fairness, impartiality and equal access to opportunities in employment and education at ANU. Special measures can be implemented to advance substantive equality.

In employment

6. Equal opportunity in employment includes the principle of selection and promotion of staff on merit, which precludes irrelevant personal attributes. Fair and transparent processes are applied in assessing the capacity of a person to perform the inherent requirements of a position, having regard to the person's knowledge, skills, qualifications and experience and their potential for future development.

In education

7. Equal opportunity in education includes the principle of selection and assessment of students on merit, which precludes irrelevant personal attributes. Fair and transparent processes are applied in assessing the capacity of a student against specified requirements to access and participate in educational programs.

Equal Opportunity for women in the workplace

8. ANU develops and implements workplace programs aimed at contributing to equal opportunity for women in the workplace and eliminating discrimination as required by the Commonwealth's Equal Opportunity for Women in the Workplace Act 1999. ANU reports on these programs which include strategies to address issues such as the under-representation of senior academic women and women in non-traditional employment fields.

The Flinders University of South Australia

Cultural Diversity and Inclusive Practice Statement

Flinders University is a culturally diverse community which recognises that each student and staff member brings their own unique capabilities, experiences and characteristics to the study or work environment.

People within our community:

- have diverse national, racial, ethnic, religious and language origins
- live with a range of abilities and disabilities
- experience different socio-economic histories and status
- experience different gender and sexual identities.

Fundamental principle

Flinders University values and respects the social, cultural and linguistic diversity of its community and encourages inclusive practices in order to provide an environment that is creative, innovative, flexible and productive.

Objectives

To recognise our commitment to cultural diversity and to sustain and enhance a culturally inclusive environment, Flinders University will:

- continue to promote a respect for cultural diversity in University programs and policies
- continue to encourage our staff and students to observe the values of inclusiveness and fairness whilst maintaining high professional standards so they are able to effectively interact with and operate in culturally diverse communities
- continue to provide adequate facilities and use materials and methods that are culturally appropriate for students and staff in the University
- develop further initiatives that promote mutual respect, harmony, cooperation and opportunities for cross-cultural exchange
- support an educational approach to the challenges that cultural diversity brings.

The University of Melbourne

The University of Melbourne Social Inclusion Plan 2012-2014

Social Inclusion Plan Goals 2012 – 2014

1. Acknowledge the value of diversity within the University community.

2. Increase the proportion of students and staff from diverse social and cultural contexts.

3. Offer outstanding learning and teaching experiences that enhance outcomes for students from diverse social and cultural contexts.

4. Enhance research and engagement contributions to national social inclusion challenges.

The University of Queensland

UQ Equity & Diversity plan 2013–2017

The University of Queensland recognises its responsibility in contributing to an equitable and diverse higher education sector in Australia and, more generally, to a more equitable, culturally aware society.

Evidence that will demonstrate this aspiration has been achieved includes:

– The UQ community is broadly representative of the diverse community in Australia

– Students and staff choose UQ as it is regarded as a safe, accepting and inclusive environment

– Everyone takes responsibility for living the equity values and embedding equity and diversity into the fabric of the UQ culture

– University staff and students have developed diversity competencies which they use when engaging with others inside and outside the University

– Inclusive pedagogies are demonstrated across all disciplines

– Flexible, responsive work practices reflect the diverse needs of equity and diversity groups

– Staff are represented at all levels and across disciplines with respect to gender, ethnicity and racial diversity including at the most senior levels

EQUITY AND DIVERSITY

Theme 1: Develop Diversity capabilities of university staff.

Theme 2: Embed Equity and Diversity in day to day University practice.

Theme 3: Drive the equity and diversity agenda through demonstrable commitment of senior staff.

LEARNING

Theme 1: Widen access to The University of Queensland for people from prioritised under-represented groups.

Theme 2: Deliver on the UQ Advantage by ensuring that choice and opportunity genuinely characterise the UQ student experience.

Theme 3: Enhance the quality of the student experience for students in identified target groups.

ENGAGEMENT

Theme 1: Widen access to The University of Queensland for people from prioritised under-represented groups.

The University of Western Australia

Policy and procedures for dealing with Equity and Diversity enquiries and grievances

The University of Western Australia is committed to maintaining an environment within the University that is free from discrimination and harassment. …

Discrimination and harassment are unacceptable behaviour. They conflict with the University's Equal Opportunity and Affirmative Action policy and deny the rights of staff and students to fair treatment. Discrimination and harassment are serious issues which undermine morale and can adversely affect the ability of staff and students to achieve their full potential within the University.

Policy and procedures for resolving complaints of discrimination and harassment have been adopted by the University to:

- promote a work and study environment which is inclusive and characterised by respect and which is free from discrimination and harassment
- provide an internal procedure for dealing with issues and complaints of discrimination and harassment which may arise
- meet the requirements of State and Federal legislation, and the University's current Equity and Diversity management plan

University of Ballarat

Equal Opportunity and Valuing Diversity Policy

The University of Ballarat is committed to providing equal opportunity and freedom from discrimination, harassment and vilification for all members of the University community, and to creating an environment which reflects and values the social and cultural diversity within the University community and the communities it serves.

The University will not tolerate discrimination, harassment or racial or religious vilification, as defined in this Policy, in any University-endorsed activities. Nor will it tolerate victimisation of any person who raises, or is involved in resolution of, a complaint of a breach of this Policy.

The University will provide reasonable adjustments to the learning and working environment as required, and will strive to apply the principles of inclusion in all of its activities, to ensure that all people have equal opportunity to access and participate in University activities.

The University will take positive steps to assist in redressing systemic disadvantage affecting participation and progression in University activities by some members of the University community and the communities it serves. As part of this, the University will put in place measures to have the composition of governance bodies, and staff and student populations better reflect, value and promote the diversity within the communities served by the University. Particular focus will be given to the Indigenous people of Australia as expressed in the University's Statement on Reconciliation.

The University will ensure that it has in place procedures to deal with any alleged breaches of this Policy fairly and expeditiously.

University of New South Wales

Equity and Diversity Policy Statement

The University of New South Wales is committed to the goals of equal opportunity and affirmative action in education and employment. It aims to provide a study and work environment for staff and students that fosters fairness, equity, and respect for social and cultural diversity, and that is free from unlawful discrimination, harassment and vilification as determined by legislation and by University Council.

In fulfilling this commitment, the University will:

- foster a University culture which values and responds to the rich diversity of its staff and students;
- provide equal opportunity by removing barriers to participation and progression in employment and education so that all staff and students have the opportunity to fully contribute to University life;
- offer programs which aim to overcome past disadvantage for members of staff and student equity groups;
- promote clear and accountable educational and management policies and practices to engender trust between managers, staff and students;
- enhance the quality of students' learning through the provision of culturally, socially and gender inclusive education in areas such as curricula, teaching methods, assessment and review provisions, written and audiovisual material and support services;

- ensure that its staff and students are aware of their rights and their responsibilities as University members.

University of Southern Queensland

Multiculturalism policy

Principles

1.To recognise the multicultural character of the Australian society and the University community.

2.To encourage staff and students of the University of Southern Queensland to respect a diverse range of cultural value systems.

3.To facilitate the contribution and successful participation of staff and students from diverse ethnic and cultural backgrounds.

4.To render support to University staff and students from various backgrounds whose work and study environment may be affected by different cultural expectations and/or language problems.

5.To make use of the cultural capital brought to the University by the staff and students from diverse cultural and language backgrounds in order to achieve the University's mission.

Procedures

The University of Southern Queensland appreciates and values highly the cultural and linguistic diversity of its staff and students.

Specific actions will be undertaken to ensure that all benefits arising from such diversity are utilised by the University and the broader community. These benefits include the skills and knowledge gained outside Australia or as a result of dealing with people from different cultures, the languages spoken by staff and students on campus and the cross-cultural communication skills.

The benefits of international cooperation with other universities, institutions and individuals are also recognised and promoted by the University.

As one of the leading providers of international education programs in Australia, the University will ensure that the academic programs are culturally inclusive in their content and delivery. The staff of the University of Southern Queensland will make every effort to respond to the diverse needs of students. Research investigation into cultural diversity, multiculturalism and specific needs of staff and students from diverse backgrounds will be encouraged.

Understanding and knowledge of other cultures and cross-cultural skills will be highly regarded in all new appointments and ongoing training.

Staff with cross-cultural skills and knowledge of specific cultures, languages, educational, legal, political or religious systems will be involved in culturally inclusive curriculum development, marketing university programs overseas and inter-institutional contacts with international universities.

Acknowledging that the University and wider community will benefit from a richer cultural and intellectual life, the University offers equal access to and participation in employment and education to all people regardless of their racial, ethnic, cultural, linguistic or religious backgrounds.

Equity in Education Policy

The purpose of this Policy is:

1. To proactively identify and minimise the organisational and institutional barriers facing particular individuals and groups who may be disadvantaged in their access to, or participation in, higher education.
2. To ensure that the University provides members of groups who are at risk of being disadvantaged in their access to, or participation in, higher education, or of becoming members of more than one equity target group, with high quality and effective interventions to facilitate and support progression and retention in their studies.
3. To ensure that all programs focused on achieving educational equity, are rigorously assessed in relation to strategies employed to enhance engagement of members of groups who may be disadvantaged in their access to or participation in, higher education and improve equitable outcomes amongst these groups.
4. To ensure that appropriate strategies are in place to support the retention of and progression of members of groups from educationally disadvantaged backgrounds
5. To ensure that the University complies with its legal responsibilities in accordance with the broader USQ Equity policy framework for equal opportunity and anti-discrimination.

Principles

The University of Southern Queensland is committed to proactively providing accessible and equitable higher education opportunities to its diverse student constituency, with a focus on the Department of Education, Science and Training (DEST) target groups identified as disadvantaged in their access to, and participation in, higher education. A particular emphasis is given to supporting the aspirations of Indigenous Australians.

The University recognises that students can be enabled to achieve according to their own individual potential, regardless of their personal circumstances and backgrounds and commits to providing teaching and learning practices which are socially and culturally responsive and inclusive in order to ensure equitable opportunities for their success.

Procedures

3.1 Application

The policy will be applied to the University on the basis of the following broad approaches:

3.1.1 Planning and Organisation

USQ structures its strategic plan around eight major goal areas, one of these areas being Equity & Multiculturalism. All USQ faculty and organisational sections are required to develop objectives and strategies as part of the annual strategic planning process that supports the University achieving identified targets in each of its identified goals.

The Student Equity office has institutional responsibilities for strategically driving, developing and evaluating equity initiatives including policy and governance. It works directly with staff from all faculties and organisational sections within the University to develop facilitate and encourage key strategies to support the needs of students from diverse backgrounds.

3.1.2 Integration

Educational equity is considered a key strategic concern of the University. As such it is the responsibility of all managers and decision makers to ensure that educational equity is integrated in all matters of policy development, forward planning and performance review within the University.

3.1.3 Inclusive practice

USQ is actively committed to protecting the rights of students to achieve their full potential in an environment which values and affirms diversity and is free from discrimination, harassment, victimisation and vilification. USQ will seek to ensure that all teaching and learning environments, academic practices and language are non-discriminatory and that equity and diversity issues such as culture, gender and disability are embedded into the principles and practices surrounding such activities.

3.1.4 Course design and content review

Curricula should be inclusive and student centred, taking account of the diversity of student needs. LTSU staff will facilitate the process of embedding equity principles in curricula. USQ will ensure that course content reviews and evaluations consider the need for equitable access and participation and ensure that students are able to contribute to these processes.

3.1.5 Specialist areas

Although USQ provides a wide range of programs and services that target all identified equity groups, specific areas of specialist teaching and support will be maintained and funded. This will ensure that the University is able to draw on a range of staff with specialist skills in matters relating to educational equity, that clear foci exist within the University where prospective and existing students can seek specialist advice and assistance, that support is ensured for identified targeted groups and that the University's educational equity objectives are pursued in an efficient and effective manner.

3.1.6 Staff Development

Academic and General staff will be encouraged and supported to attend regular professional training and development activities provided by the Student Equity Office and Equal Opportunity Unit in relation to equity and diversity issues relevant to the University as per the F.1 Learning and Development Policy.

3.1.7 Institutional Committees

The Social Justice Committee framework, established in 2004-5 provides a high level of coordination of equity and equal opportunity activities, and ensures stronger linkages to the decision making structures in the University.

3.1.8 Participation

USQ will support participation by students in accessing learning resources relevant to their course by providing specialist support and information which is accessible in a range of formats including hard copy, CD-ROM and online. The University will attempt to be responsive to the unique circumstances of students experiencing educational disadvantage, within the parameters of normal administrative procedures and budgetary constraints.

University of Tasmania

Equity and Diversity Plan, 2009–2011

Key Principles

UTAS has identified eight key principles that underpin the goals of the Equity and Diversity Plan and which articulate the university's equity and diversity values. These principles are:

1. All people have inherent dignity and have the right to be treated with courtesy and respect.

2. The university has a responsibility to provide an environment that is free from harassment and discrimination for all of its members.

3. All members of the university community, including staff, students and visitors have an active role to play in implementing the Equity and Diversity Plan.

4. Inclusive practices are usually more effective and less discriminatory than residual services that target the needs of particular groups.

5. Diversity and difference amongst the university population are acknowledged and accepted as valuable characteristics that have a legitimate place within the university.

6. Staff and students have the right to determine for themselves whether they require special consideration for their particular needs.

7. The indigenous peoples of Tasmania are recognised as the land's original inhabitants and as the traditional custodians, dispossessed and disempowered in the process of European invasion. The university acknowledges the special place of Aboriginal culture and values in the university community.

8. To be effective, equal opportunity considerations must be integrated into university processes and practices at all levels.

University of Technology, Sydney

Multicultural policies and services

UTS values its culturally diverse community, and is committed to implementing policies and services that engage with multiculturalism in the broader community.

UTS is required by the NSW State Government to embed four key principles into core business through its **multicultural policies and services plan** (MPSP). The four principles are:

- leadership to encourage and value a culturally diverse society through the establishment of supportive policy, legal and planning frameworks;
- community harmony;
- access and equity within the framework of social justice obligations;
- economic and cultural opportunities.

These principles confirm the right of individuals in New South Wales to:

- fully contribute and participate in the life of the state;
- respect the culture, language and religion of others (within a legal and constitutional framework where English is the common language);
- have access to government services;

- have the linguistic and cultural assets in New South Wales recognised and promoted.

The UTS multicultural policies and services plan is currently under development, it will provide an overview of strategies and priorities for both staff and students at UTS.

Widening Participation Strategy

The UTS Widening Participation Strategy (WPS) provides a whole-of-university approach to increase the number of students from low socio-economic (low SES) and Indigenous backgrounds successfully completing university study.

The WPS recognises that raising aspiration and enrolling students from disadvantaged backgrounds into university is just the first step. Students must also be supported in their transition to university study to equip them for success and graduation.

University of the Sunshine Coast

Equity–Governing Policy

2.2 The University will take all reasonable steps to actively promote an environment in which there is equality of opportunity, freedom from discrimination on the basis of attributes listed in 2.1 and from all forms of harassment in employment and education for all staff, students and visitors to the campus.

2.3 The University will put in place specific policies and procedures aimed at promoting equity and eliminating discriminatory and harassing practices and providing a means of redress where discrimination or harassment have occurred.

2.4 The University will take steps to actively promote equality of opportunity and elimination of discrimination and harassment by:

- addressing past and current disadvantage
- education of the University community
- integration of equity considerations into all University wide, Faculty and area plans
- providing adequate funding for equity measures
- reviewing University policy, rules and procedures to eliminate any direct, indirect or systemic discriminatory provisions or practices.

2.5 The University Council may determine that particular groups or attributes in addition to those named in state and federal legislation, will be included as identified equity groups or attributes for the purposes of University equity plans and equal opportunity, discrimination and harassment policies.

2.6 The University will promote social and cultural cohesion by respecting and valuing the diversity of staff and student backgrounds and cultures through teaching and management practices and in the provision of administrative and other services on campus.

2.7 University policies will include special measures (additional services or special conditions which are only available to identified equity groups or persons with particular attributes as defined in this policy) where there is justification for doing so on the basis of past or current disadvantage and inequity.

2.8 Equity in employment shall be encouraged and addressed in conditions of service including appointment, progression, classification (equal pay for equal work) and access to staff development for all targeted equity groups and Indigenous people. Selection and progression of staff shall be based on the merit principle.

2.9 Equity in educational access, participation and success of students shall be encouraged and addressed through programs contained in a Student Equity Plan, an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Education Strategy and a Disability Action Plan.

University of Western Sydney

Equal Opportunity Policy

Section 3 - Policy Statement

(3) It is the policy of the University of Western Sydney to provide equal opportunity for all staff and students regardless of sex, pregnancy, race, marital status, homosexuality, age, family responsibilities, disability, transgender, political conviction or religious belief.

(4) UWS integrates equal opportunity principles within all its decisions and operations.

(5) UWS is committed to the examination of all of its policies and practices, as they affect both students and staff, to ensure the elimination of discrimination and harassment on the grounds of sex; pregnancy; race, colour, ethnic or ethno-religious background, descent or national identity; marital status; homosexuality; age; family responsibilities; disability; transgender; political conviction or religious belief. UWS is committed to supporting the balancing of carers' responsibilities of staff within the workplace. UWS is also committed to providing a work and learning environment free from vilification on the grounds of race, homosexuality, transgender or HIV/AIDS status.

(6) UWS is committed to redressing the disadvantages of particular groups, recognised as being disadvantaged in the past, and will implement specific programs to improve employment and educational opportunities for people from these groups. These groups include women, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, people with a disability and people from non-English speaking backgrounds.

Discrimination, Harassment, Vilification and Victimisation Prevention Policy

Section 3 - Policy Statement

(7) UWS is committed to providing an environment free from unlawful discrimination, unlawful harassment, vilification, victimisation, and unlawful adverse action and ensuring that employees and students are treated with integrity and respect.

(8) Unlawful discrimination, unlawful harassment, vilification, victimisation and unlawful adverse action are unacceptable at the University of Western Sydney and such behaviour by a member of the University community will not be tolerated under any circumstances.

(9) All members of UWS have the right to work and study in an environment free from unlawful discrimination, unlawful harassment, vilification, victimisation and unlawful adverse action.

(10) Everyone at UWS has a responsibility not to participate in discriminatory, harassing, vilifying, or victimising behaviour.

(11) UWS will take action, in accordance with the procedures outlined in this policy, against any employee, agent or student when a breach of this policy is identified or reported.

(12) Managers and supervisors have a primary role for ensuring that unlawful discrimination and unlawful harassment, victimisation, and vilification does not occur at UWS.

(13) This policy only covers behaviours that are contrary to anti-discrimination laws such as unlawful discrimination, unlawful harassment, vilification, victimisation and unlawful adverse action.

(14) Adverse Behaviours not covered by law such as harassment, incivility, and some types of unprofessional conduct are against UWS policy and the Code of Conduct and are covered by the Respect and Inclusion in Leaning and Working Policy.

(15) In order to prevent unlawful discrimination and unlawful harassment, victimisation, vilification and unlawful adverse action the University of Western Sydney aims to:

a. adopt a risk management approach to unlawful discrimination and unlawful harassment, victimisation, vilification, and unlawful adverse action which identifies hazards, assesses risk, and eliminates or controls the source of the problem;

b. create a working and learning environment that is free from unlawful discrimination and unlawful harassment, victimisation, vilification, and unlawful adverse action, and one where all members of the university community are treated inclusively and with respect;

c. promote appropriate standards of conduct at all times;

d. implement training and awareness raising strategies to ensure that all employees and students know their rights and responsibilities with regards to unlawful discrimination and unlawful harassment, vilification, victimisation, and unlawful adverse action;

e. encourage the reporting of behaviour that breaches this policy;

f. guarantee protection from any victimisation or reprisals for being involved in a complaint under this policy;

g. provide an effective procedure for unlawful discrimination and unlawful harassment, vilification and victimisation complaints based on the principles of natural justice;

h. treat all complaints in a sensitive, fair, timely, and confidential manner; and

i. engage in a process of regular policy and procedural review and improvement.

Respect and Inclusion in Learning and Working Policy

Policy Statement

(10) The University is committed to providing and maintaining a harmonious and productive environment:

a. where all people interact and relate to each other with dignity and civility;

b. free from discrimination, harassment, bullying and any other form of adverse or inappropriate behaviour;

c. where staff and students are expected to treat others fairly and respectfully, and with proper regard for their rights and obligations.

(11) The University is committed to demonstrating the highest standards of personal and professional conduct. In keeping with this commitment the University expects all individuals and groups within the UWS community to behave according to all relevant policies, procedures and agreements.

(12) The University promotes an organisational culture which values respectful treatment of others. UWS values equity and diversity and a safe and supportive working and learning environment. To this end the University supports and promotes a range of policy measures to prevent discriminatory treatment and make flexible and inclusive provisions for staff and

students, which take account of the needs and interests of the diverse UWS community. These can be accessed on the University's Policy DDS.

Victoria University

Student equity and social Inclusion Policy

Policy Statement

5.1 Equity, Diversity & Social Justice:

Victoria University is committed to being fair, equitable and sensitive to the diverse needs of all its students in all its policies and practices. The following principles of equity and social justice will be integrated into all the University structures, policies and procedures:

• fairness in the provision of University services and programs to students;

• fair access to educational opportunities at the University;

• fair opportunities for successful participation of students in University programs and services;

• opportunities for genuine participation in decision-making for students;

• promotion of a learning and work environment which is socially inclusive, values diversity and allows students to realise their full potential, where students are able to study and work effectively without fear of discrimination or harassment; and

• protection of the human rights of students.

5.2 Social Inclusion

The University will work in partnership with the community to achieve social inclusion by encouraging participation in all levels of education, especially by people from previously excluded groups.

The University will develop and operate plans and programs to increase access and promote success in education for designated under-represented groups.

The University is committed to providing policies and programs which recognise and address the character and needs of the people of the western region of Melbourne.

5.3 Equal Opportunity

In order to meet its obligations under this policy, Victoria University undertakes to promote equal opportunity in all aspects of the University's activities through strategic initiatives and by eliminating unlawful direct and indirect discrimination and harassment on the grounds of:

•race, colour, national or ethnic origin, descent, nationality;

•sex, gender identity, lawful sexual activity, sexual orientation, marital status, pregnancy or potential pregnancy, breastfeeding, family responsibilities, status as a parent or carer;

•religious or political belief or activity, industrial activity, irrelevant criminal record;

•age, physical features, disability (past, present or imputed), medical record; and

•personal association with a person who is identified by reference to any of the above listed attributes.

The University's policy should be interpreted to include all attributes protected by Federal and State anti-discrimination legislation.

5.4 The University's Commitments

The University will develop and implement plans and programs to increase access and promote success in education for designated under-represented groups, including people from a low socio-economic background. The University is committed to providing policies and programs which facilitate social inclusion by recognising and addressing the character and needs of the people of the western region of Melbourne. To promote equity and equal opportunity, Victoria University will:

•provide a teaching, learning and working environment that values cultural and linguistic diversity, fosters mutual respect and cultural competence and responds to diverse needs;

•ensure that its structures, policies and practices are free from direct and indirect discrimination;

•educate the University community on the goals and philosophy of equal opportunity, equity and social justice;

•use non-discriminatory, inclusive language and practices; and

•provide effective mechanisms to resolve equal opportunity-related complaints.

Australian Catholic University

Cultural Diversity Policy

Policy objectives

The objectives of this policy are for the University, in its working, teaching and learning, research and community engagement to –

(a) give specific acknowledgement and support to the cultures of Australian Indigenous peoples;

(b) recognize and value the multicultural nature of Australian society and of the University community;

(c) provide a diverse, flexible and creative study and work environment which acknowledges, supports, values and encourages cultural diversity and assists in the development of understandings of and insights into a range of cultures;

(d) facilitate the contribution and successful participation within the University, its courses and activities, of students and staff from diverse cultural backgrounds;

(e) emphasise the value of cultural diversity and strengthen its commitment to cultural inclusiveness, in

    (i) the content and delivery of courses and units, including clinical and practicum placements; and

    (ii) the delivery of services across all areas of the University;

(f) educate students and staff so that they are capable of responding sensitively, sympathetically and justly in any cultural context;

(g) attempt to redress any unfair, discriminatory or illegal practices which may result or have resulted directly or indirectly from cultural difference, identity and/or context;

(h) promote cultural activities which celebrate the diversity of its staff and students; and

(i) as far as is reasonably practicable, provide culturally appropriate support services for Australian Indigenous and international students and staff.

The University in its various activities, including the development and application of policies which guide its operation, will be informed by its commitment to support of and sensitivity to cultural diversity.

Developing a Critical Interventions Framework for advancing equity in Australian higher education

Discussion paper prepared for the
Department of Industry, Innovation, Climate Change,
Science, Research and Tertiary Education

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Centre for the Study of Higher Education
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April 2013

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List of Abbreviations

ATAR	Australian tertiary admission rank
ENTER	Equivalent national tertiary entrance ranking
HEPPP	Higher education participation and partnerships program
SES	Socioeconomic status
VET	Vocational education and training

Executive Summary

This report presents for discussion a Critical Interventions Framework designed to assist in advancing equity in higher education. The report:

- summarises the patterns of access and participation for key equity target groups in the period following the 2008 Review of Australian Higher Education (the 'Bradley Review');
- reviews the national and international literature in search of available evidence in support of the effectiveness of specific initiatives and programs implemented to advance equity;
- presents a possible typology of equity initiatives, styled as a Critical Interventions Framework, to assist in conceptualising policy and practice and informing research and evaluation;
- presents a summary of the plausibility and apparent evidence base for the types of initiatives described in the Critical Interventions Framework; and
- presents a broad summary of the national patterns of equity initiatives drawn from an analysis of the institutional reports provided to the Commonwealth as part of the Higher Education Participation and Partnerships program (HEPPP), again against the Critical Interventions Framework.

The report's emphasis is on low SES access and participation given the importance that has been attached to this group in public policy.

The progress: the patterns in higher education equity following the Bradley Review

Since the Bradley Review a number of factors have affected the patterns of access and participation for students from equity groups. These include:

- the uncapping or deregulation of the volume of undergraduate places, which has influenced patterns of institutional recruitment, selection and admissions;
- the establishment of a national target for low SES participation — a 20% share of places by 2020 — and the inclusion of institutional equity targets in Mission-Based Compacts and the allocation of performance-based funding incentives;
- the funding available to institutions for equity initiatives through the Higher Education Participation and Partnerships program (HEPPP); and
- wider societal trends in community beliefs about the value of undertaking higher education and changing assumptions about entry requirements and eligibility for participation.

These factors are tightly interwoven and it is difficult, and risky, to speculate on their relative impact. Nonetheless, the uncapping of undergraduate places has had a major effect on the character of the higher education sector and led to a dramatic period of growth in overall student numbers. Uncapping may have been the single most significant factor in the rising numbers of students from equity target groups who have been admitted to higher education. However, it is equally true that uncapping has lifted access to higher education across the board. Thus the gains in the participation *share* for low SES people have been modest even though the trend is clearly in the right direction. On current trends the 20% target will be elusive by

2020. For most equity target groups, and Indigenous people in particular, parity in the share of higher education places seems a long way off.

On the plus side though, close analysis of access data against a pre-Bradley Review baseline of 2007 reveals considerable growth in the number of students from low SES backgrounds and Indigenous students, indeed growth rates that have outstripped those of domestic onshore students as a whole. Against an increase in total onshore domestic student numbers of 16.4% since 2007, the number of Indigenous students has increased 27.0%, while the number of students from low SES backgrounds has increased by 21.2%. These patterns are particularly notable given the proportion of students from these equity groups remained little changed in the decade before the Bradley Review.

The future: Identifying key foci for equity initiatives

The positive trends in access for historically under-represented groups are a direct result of the federal government and institutions placing equity group participation centrally in the higher education agenda. Part of the federal government's commitment to equity has been the provision of HEPPP funding to allow institutions, often working in partnerships, to influence particular key points in the student 'life cycle' to encourage more students from equity target groups to, among other things, consider higher education to be a possibility for them, to build academic attainment and to be more fully conversant with the opportunities available to them. HEPPP funding has provided an important resource for universities and has led to a wide range of significant initiatives across the nation.

There remains much to be done. Despite increased participation for students from equity groups, the participation rate for students from low SES, Indigenous and remote backgrounds (as well as other educationally disadvantaged backgrounds) remains below parity—in some cases, well below. The participation ratio for low SES students is 0.62, with 1.0 indicating parity, whereas that of Indigenous students is 0.55, and students from remote backgrounds, 0.39.

Some institutions have achieved little or no gains in the proportion of low SES students among cohorts of commencing students, although others have generated increases. The reasons for the unevenness across the sector are not clear.

There remain widespread beliefs, often tacit, that allowing more educationally disadvantaged people will lead to higher attrition rates or a lowering of academic standards in order to achieve successful completions. In fact, there is little evidence for these perceptions. Once at university, low SES students are not substantially less likely to successfully complete their studies, having approximately 96% of the retention and success rates of domestic students overall.

For these reasons, we believe that initiatives to increase access for educationally disadvantaged students are fundamentally important in meeting the Federal Government's higher education targets for the proportion of the population with university level qualifications from low SES backgrounds. The major disparities continue to lie in access, not in retention or completion. This is not to argue that students from educationally disadvantaged do not need support once enrolled.

Indigenous students and students from remote backgrounds are an exception to these conclusions. Students from these groups display notably lower retention and success rates than students from other groups. The retention rate for Indigenous students is

only 85% of the average onshore domestic student, while for students from remote backgrounds, it is 91%. The success rate for Indigenous students is 81% of the average; the success rate for remote students is perhaps less concerning, at 94% of the average. In these cases, targeted efforts to increase academic, financial and personal support, and therefore academic success, are particularly warranted.

The proposed Critical Interventions Framework

The Critical Interventions Framework presented for discussion is summarised in Figure 1.1 on the following page. This framework is a simple typology of the broad categories of equity initiative and is designed to be a device for focusing on supporting national discussion of the most effective ways to target efforts and resources. This typology was derived from commonplace assumptions about potential barriers or inhibitors for students for equity target groups and refined following a literature review.

The typology has been used to present a summary tabulation of:

- the plausibility or theoretical case for particular types of equity initiatives; and
- the available evidence, national or international, on the effectiveness of these equity initiatives.

This framework is designed to inform future initiatives and to guide evaluation. It is presented in a preliminary format for future fine-tuning and refinement.

The final phase of the project involved analysis of the HEPPP reports provided by institutions to the government. Information from anonymised reports were then mapped against the typology in the framework to determine a broadbrush analysis of where national efforts have been focused. This stage of the project did not seek to reach any judgements on the effectiveness of the initiatives, for the reports typically do not include evaluative evidence. It is noted that many equity initiatives implemented post-Bradley Review are relatively new and their effects may take some time to become apparent.

Strengthening the evaluation and research evidence-base

A major finding of this project is the relative dearth of publicly available, peer-reviewed research or evaluation, conducted with rigorous methodologies, on the effects of equity initiatives. In some cases, this is due to the high number of confounding factors that can influence, say, an individual's decision to attend university, and the complexity of attempting to analyse those decisions within a diverse population. In these situations, it may be difficult, if not impossible, to assess the efficacy of equity initiatives and programs with any reliability. Program design in these circumstances is an act of faith, though often highly well-judged and highly credible. A stronger platform for research and evaluation needs to be developed and utilised and the results of program evaluation should be published more widely.

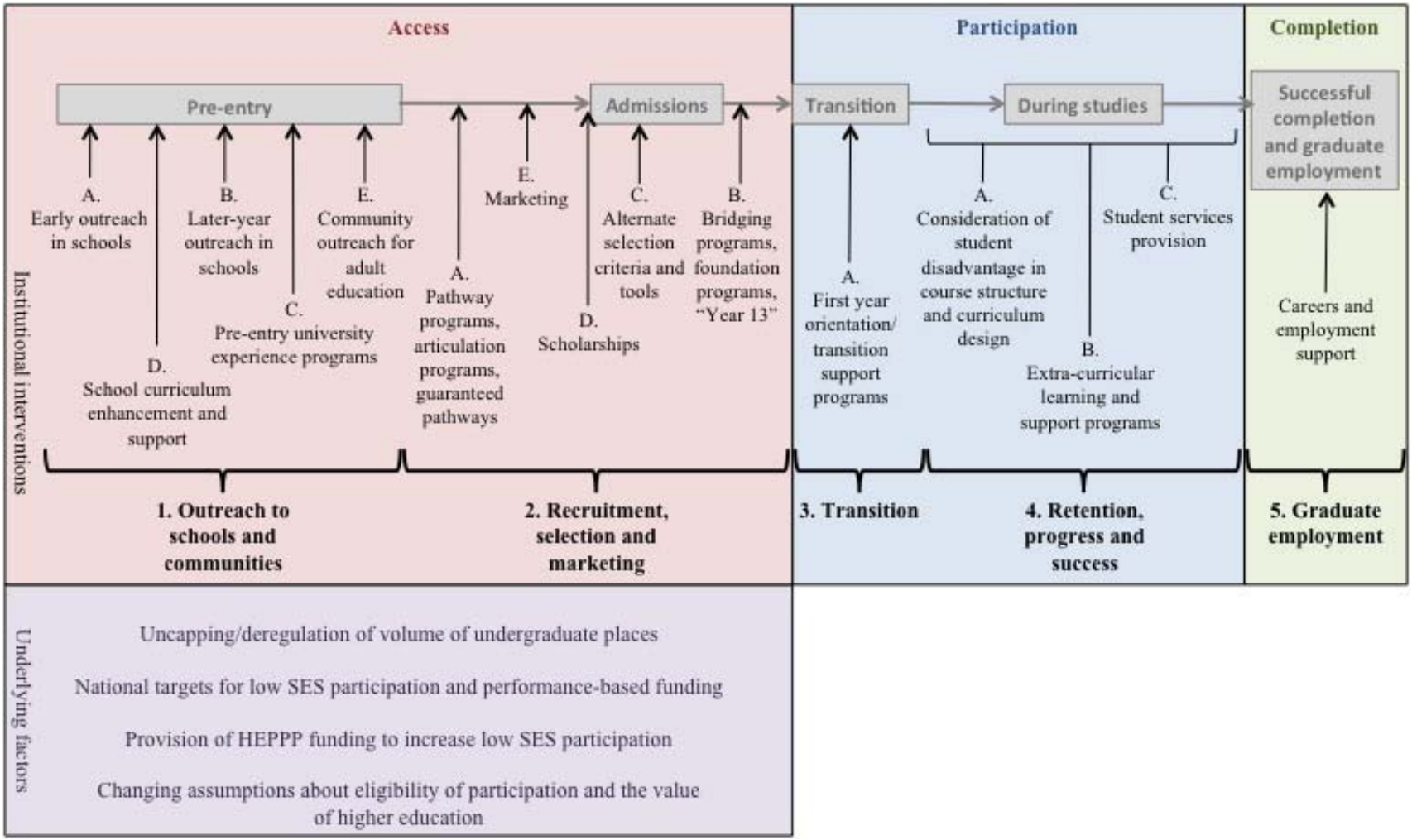

Figure 1.1: Factors leading to increased completion, particularly for students from low SES backgrounds.

1. The Critical Interventions Framework project

1.1 Project aims and methodology

This report reviews available literature and data relating to initiatives and projects to improve the access, participation, retention, success and attainment rates of students from low socio-economic status (SES) backgrounds in higher education. These techniques and strategies have been organised into a typology based on the timing and method of the initiative. Based on findings from the literature and pedagogical assumptions about low SES students, the theoretical effectiveness or 'plausibility' of each initiative has been assessed, as well as important factors affecting the efficacy of an initiative. Research evidence has also been reviewed to determine the level of evidential support for these pedagogical assumptions. This interventions framework, detailed in the next chapter, forms the major outcome of this project.

The report also contains a broadbrush summary of statistical data supplied by the Department of Innovation, Industry, Climate Change, Science, Research and Tertiary Education (DIICCSRTE) concerning under-represented groups over the five years since the 2008 Review of Australian Higher Education.

The purpose of this report is to help identify the initiatives that might be the most effective in addressing the persistent under-representation of low SES people in higher education with a view to informing policies and strategies to guide resource deployment and providing a framework for instituting and evaluating equity initiatives. Identifying the volume and quality of rigorous research and evaluation support for equity initiatives is a particularly important objective.

A primary goal of the project was therefore to examine the evidence of efficacy for the range of initiatives designed to increase access, retention and success for students from equity target groups, especially those from low SES backgrounds. The specific were to:

- identify the range of methods, techniques, strategies and initiatives that are or have been used to increase higher education access, participation and success for people from low SES backgrounds;
- summarise and evaluate the evidence of the effectiveness of the initiatives identified as priority areas;
- identify the extent to which timing or other contextual factors may impact on the efficacy of the initiative;
- indicate the quality and consistency of the evidence for the effectiveness of the initiative; and
- where possible, indicate the strength or statistical effect size of the initiative.

The project focused on initiatives targeting domestic students from low SES backgrounds generally, from regional and rural backgrounds, and Indigenous students.

To achieve these goals, a simple notional typology of initiatives was developed. This typology was derived from widespread assumptions about potential barriers or inhibitors for low SES students rather than a comprehensive empirical conception of the terrain, for none such exists. Statistical data were analysed to establish a

background against which these initiatives were operating, and to validate the hypothesised 'blockage' points.

The typology was refined following an extensive literature review, and the theoretical or pedagogical assumptions underlying the initiatives were determined. A further review of the literature was performed to establish the extent or strength of the research evidence supporting the use of each initiative. To qualify for inclusion, studies were required to report empirically validated, methodologically sound findings; purely theoretical papers were not included. When analysed in this way there is a paucity of evidence in the international literature on the effects of particular equity initiatives even though these might have face-validity.

The final phase of the project involved analysis of the HEPPP reports provided by institutions to the government. Information from anonymised institutional HEPPP reports were then mapped against the typology to determine where institutions had focused their efforts and further inform the range of initiatives in the typology. Although similar initiatives were grouped together in this typology, we cannot be sure that surface similarities used to group initiatives equate to similarly effective outcomes; individual factors in the way institutions deploy an initiative may lead to different degrees of efficacy. Nonetheless, the analysis points to the emphases in the initiatives devised by institutions in utilising HEPPP funds — the aggregate patterns across the nation. This stage of the project did not seek to reach any judgements on the effectiveness of the initiatives, for the reports typically do not include evaluative evidence. It is noted that many equity initiatives implemented post-Bradley Review are relatively new and their effects may take some time to become apparent, though many have been in place for many years in some form.

1.2 The policy context

Compared with many nations, Australia has a well-developed understanding of equity issues in higher education, aided by a long-established policy framework of equity initiatives and a considerable database of information concerning a wide range of factors including age, gender, SES, locality, ethnicity and disability (James et al 2008, p. 13).

In 2008, the Bradley Review performed a sweeping review of the Australian higher education sector. Equity, and the performance of equity groups, formed a major part of the analysis. Bradley et al (2008, pp. 27, 29) reported that there had been success in previous areas of inequity—women, for example, now outnumbered men in higher education except in research higher degrees, engineering and information technology—but students from regional and remote areas, Indigenous students and those from low SES backgrounds were still seriously under-represented. In fact, the participation ratios for these groups had either remained stable for many years, or, in some cases, worsened (Bradley et al 2008, pp. 30-32).

The argument for improving the participation of these groups has multiple dimensions. From a purely economic point of view, there are strong benefits for both individuals and society in having higher education qualifications: "Over the working lifetime of a university graduate the financial gain generated from income is more than $1.5 million or 70 per cent more than those whose highest qualification is Year 12" (Payne and Percival 2008). However, there are also social benefits. As Bradley et al. expressed is not only necessary for maintaining a high standard of living in Australia but also underpins a robust democracy and a civil and just society (Bradley et al 2008, p. xi).

In response to the Bradley Review, the Federal government released *Transforming Australia's Higher Education System* (Commonwealth of Australia 2009). Acknowledging the importance of providing the opportunity for all Australians, especially under-represented groups, to access the tertiary education system based on merit rather than their ability to pay, the government established targets for higher education achievement. By 2025, 40 per cent of 25 to 34 year olds will hold a bachelor degree or higher, increasing from the contemporary level of 32 per cent. This target requires the graduation of an additional 219,000 students by 2025. To graduate this many additional students at the completion rate of 72 per cent cited in the Bradley review (Bradley 2008, p. 21, OECD 2008) will require the enrolment of 304,000 new undergraduate students by 2021 (Sellar et al. 2011).

To help achieve this goal, and well as to reduce educational and subsequent financial and social inequality, 20 per cent of university enrolments (the participation rate) at the undergraduate level will be of people from a low SES background by 2020, which additionally has led to setting a number of targets for secondary school achievement as well as increased funding for pathway programs, financial support for students and changes to the sector's funding structure. It is through these new enrolments that the 20 per cent participation target for low SES students is linked with the broader attainment goals.

The major barriers to the participation of students from low SES backgrounds, as described in the Bradley review and acknowledged by the government, are educational attainment, lower awareness of the long term benefits of higher education, less aspiration to participate, and the potential need for extra financial, academic or personal support once enrolled (Commonwealth of Australia 2009, p. 13). Equity initiatives are implemented to address each of these barriers.

The Australian higher education equity agenda, as currently defined, derives from the landmark discussion paper, *A Fair Chance for All* (Dawkins 1990):

> The overall objective for equity in higher education is to ensure that Australians from all groups in society have the opportunity to participate successfully in higher education. This will be achieved by changing the balance of the student population to reflect more closely the composition of the society as a whole.

A Fair Chance for All designated the current equity target groups, broadly following the disadvantaged social groups identified in the mid 1970s, which were later codified in the Australian equity framework (Commonwealth of Australia 1990). They have changed little since. These equity groups are:

- people from low SES backgrounds;
- people from regional and remote areas;
- people with a disability;
- people from non-English speaking backgrounds;
- women in non-traditional areas of study and higher degrees; and
- Indigenous people.

Identification of people in these groups is typically collected at enrolment based on self-identification or, in the case of regional, remote and low SES students, derived from assumptions based on their address. This method, and the groups themselves,

have changed little since their original classification. The performance of equity groups is measured by five key indicators:

- access (the proportion of the equity group among commencing domestic students);
- participation (the proportion of the equity group among domestic students overall);
- retention (the number of students who re-enrol at an institution divided by the number of students enrolled the previous year minus completions);
- success (the proportion of units passed in a year to the total number of units enrolled); and
- completions (the proportion of students successfully completing all the academic requirements of a course).

2. The literature on equity initiatives

The next two chapters present an overview of the context and background for the development of the proposed Critical Interventions Framework (CIF). This section reviews the literature on equity initiatives and provides a theoretical rationale or 'plausibility' case for the initiatives in the typology within the proposed CIF. Chapter 3 presents an analysis of recent patterns in access and participation in higher education for equity groups in Australian higher education.

Key points:

* There are five broad periods in a student's life cycle where equity initiatives might be targeted: a) prior to seeking access to higher education, b) at the point of selection/admissions c) during transition, d) during an individual's higher education studies, and e) during the post-completion period of finding employment relevant to the studies completed.

* Outreach to schools and communities forms the core of initiatives aimed at informing aspirations prior to students seeking access to higher education. While the theoretical basis, or plausibility or face-validity, of these initiatives is generally strong, there is little direct empirical evidence of the effectiveness of these initiatives.

* Evidence suggests that resourcing problems in schools in low SES and non-metropolitan areas can affect Year 12 retention and achievement, resulting in lower participation in higher education among low SES students. There is therefore an argument for implementing early initiatives aimed at improving students' academic achievement and year 12 retention rates.

* Awarding scholarships potentially affects aspiration, access and retention as they reduce both the perceived and actual financial obstacles to higher education. Providing financial support is thus a common response to increasing access for low SES students; however, this is based on the assumption that cost is the principal barrier to access, when often it may not be.

***** In terms of retention and success, there is plentiful evidence supporting the value of orientation and transition initiatives. These programs aim to enhance student engagement and retention, and often overlap with other initiatives targeting more general retention and success.

* Providing student support services is seen as being important for reducing attrition due to personal or financial hardship, and to enhance student well-being, skills-building and overall engagement with the university. However, evidence seems to suggest that low SES students are less likely to make use of these services. In addition, there is little evidence to suggest that universities with more extensive student support services have better retention rates.

Across the student life cycle, there are arguably five identifiable periods for equity initiatives in higher education: a) prior to seeking access to higher education, b) at selection/admissions c) during transition into higher education, d) during an individual's studies, and e) during the post-completion phase of finding suitable

employment, These are therefore also the points where institutions can intervene to encourage an individual to undertake higher education and help them succeed once in university. A review of the major factors affecting student access to higher education at each of these points can inform the design and evaluation of initiatives.

2.1 Prior to seeking access to higher education

This section examines initiatives that operate relatively early in an individual's life, informing their aspirations and those of their families and communities. These initiatives aim to increase the proportion of students who complete Year 12 and are therefore eligible to apply for university. Behrendt et al (2012, p. xi) describes this as "unlocking capacity and empowering choices." This captures the two different aspects of initiatives operating prior to an individual seeking access to higher education: to build skills where necessary; to help individuals reach a point where they are eligible to enter higher education, should they so choose; and to inform their aspirations regarding higher education, particularly in relation to beliefs about who "belongs" at university and who doesn't.

Three closely interlinked factors prevent students from low SES backgrounds from attempting to access higher education: lower Year 12 completion rates, lower academic achievement, and alternative aspirations. There is little impetus to do well at school, or stay in school past Year 10, for example, if one aspires to enter a job that requires no qualifications beyond completing Year 10. Students also moderate their aspirations to study at school and beyond based on academic achievement. The three factors therefore thread together in complex ways, and programs that operate at this point in the student life cycle are therefore frequently also multi-factorial -- that is, a program may involve informing aspirations as well as increasing academic achievement.

Outreach to schools and communities forms the core of these initiatives. This outreach can be directed to specific communities and age groups, or undirected, as in the case of general marketing which may involve an equity message. Directed outreach may involve university visits to schools and communities, or, conversely, university experience programs where students visit an institution (to make universities seem less intimidating and perhaps enable students to see that university students are not so different to themselves). These initiatives may target children in late primary and early secondary school, students in later-year secondary education, or adults who may not currently be undertaking any form of education.

The theoretical case for these initiatives is generally very good; as discussed below, good data exists about the barriers to higher education many students face, and these initiatives typically seek to remove these barriers as much as possible. However, it is much harder to obtain data and evaluate an initiative's effectiveness, given that other factors such as differences in the student body, school culture, staff capacities and other factors may confound the analysis. Likewise, schools or communities that partner with universities may undergo structural or cultural changes that are unrelated to the program. Even broader structural changes (such as the uncapping of university places following the Bradley review) may also affect the proportions of students attending university from particular areas, further confounding program evaluation. This problem was encountered by Morris and Golden (2005) in their evaluation of Aimhigher in the UK: although they showed a slight increase in GCSE achievement and the proportion of students intending to participate in higher education in schools with Aimhigher

programs, this effect was impossible to trace to specific initiatives rather than systemic changes.

Removing barriers to higher education is highly contingent upon a number of factors including access to, and completion of, Year 12. For low SES students, Year 12 completion rates are significantly lower than that for students from medium or high SES backgrounds (James et al 2008). In 2006, an estimated 59 per cent of low SES students completed Year 12, compared to 78 per cent of high SES students and 64 per cent of medium SES students. Of those who completed Year 12, 38 per cent went to university, compared to 43 per cent of medium SES students and 60 per cent of high SES students (DEST, cited in James et al 2008). Similarly, an estimated 52 per cent of students from remote backgrounds completed Year 12 in 2006, compared to 62 per cent of those from regional backgrounds and 69 per cent from urban areas (DEST, cited in James et al 2008). Teese et al (2007) reported that a disproportionately high number of early leavers are from non-metropolitan areas: 41.9 per cent of early leavers surveyed in the On Track project were from non-metropolitan areas. The current proportion of Australians from regional and remote areas is 31.3 per cent, indicating that this figure is 133 per cent of parity—a substantial over-representation.

Indigenous secondary school students are even less likely to complete Year 12 and thus be eligible to apply to university. The proportion of full-time Indigenous students who continued to Year 12 in 2010 relative to those who commenced in Year 7 is 47.2 per cent. For non-Indigenous students, the apparent retention rate is 79.4 per cent (Behrendt et al 2012, p. 6; SCRGSP 2011, p. 4.58). Indigenous students are therefore much less likely to commence Year 12 than non-Indigenous students. They are also less likely to complete Year 12: the completion rate in 2008 was 45.4 per cent of Indigenous students, compared to 88.1 per cent of non-Indigenous students (Behrendt et al 2012, p. 6; SCRGSP 2011, p. 4.49). In the same year, around 10 per cent of Indigenous students who completed Year 12 gained a university entrance score, compared to around 46 per cent of non-Indigenous students (Behrendt et al 2012, p. 6; DEEWR 2008, pp. xxi, 35).

Much of the literature cites lower Year 12 retention rates as a contributing factor to lower participation in higher education in regional areas and Indigenous communities, which may be attributed to poor quality schooling and lack of schooling choice in regional areas (DEEWR 2010, Creswell and Underwood 2004, Lamb et al 2000, Lamb et al 2004, Marks 2007). The Programme for International Student Assessment found in 2006 that students in the lowest SES quartile and students from remote schools were approximately twice as likely to perform below the baseline scientific literacy proficiency compared with Australian students generally (23 per cent and 27 per cent compared with 13 per cent respectively—Thomson and De Bortoli 2008). In the same year, the On Track survey found that 61.3 per cent of all low achievers in Year 12 came from low to very low SES backgrounds (Teese et al 2007).

The link between low academic achievement and the likelihood of dropping out of school has been clearly established (Lamb et al 2004, Teese et al 2007). Schools in low SES and non-metropolitan areas are more likely to suffer from resourcing problems, have a limited number of teachers, and have less access to high quality teaching resources, all of which have been shown to play an important role in Year 12 retention and achievement (DEEWR 2010, Welch et al 2007, Creswell and Underwood 2004, Lamb et al 2004). These factors suggest that low SES students may be poor candidates for university study by the time they reach Year 9 (Cardak and Ryan 2009), which

means that any attempt to improve academic achievement and Year 12 retention rates should be done as early as possible. Intervening to increase student preparation may also be effective (Warburton et al. 2001).

A common finding in the literature (James et al. 1999; Archer and Hutchings 2000; James 2002; James et al. 2008) is that student from low SES and rural backgrounds aspire to non-higher education pathways in larger numbers than high SES students. Only 42 per cent of low SES and 50 per cent of medium SES students in Years 10 to 12 planned to enter university, as opposed to 69.5 per cent of high SES secondary school students (James et al 2008, James et al 1999). Indigenous students are also more likely to seek entry to VET rather than higher education; 4.6 per cent of all enrolments in VET in 2010 were from Indigenous students, and Indigenous students aged 15 to 19 participate in VET in approximately similar numbers to those participating in school (NCVER 2010, Behrendt et al 2012).

James (2002) believes these alternative aspirations to be due to "the cumulative effect of the relative absence of encouraging factors and the presence of a stronger set of inhibiting factors." A major deterrent for low SES students is the perceived cost of higher education, which includes fees, relocation costs, travel costs and other costs associated with travel (James 2002, Teese et al 2007, Hillman 2005). While these costs are often not insignificant, particularly for those students who are forced to relocate to study, students often overestimated the financial burden of higher education (James et al 2008). Awarding scholarships therefore potentially affects aspiration, access and retention, as they reduce both the perceived and actual financial obstables to higher education. Initiatives addressing the costs of university study will be addressed in the next section; they are mentioned here because of their impact on the aspirations of students.

Many studies have found that non-metropolitan students are less likely to aspire to university study than metropolitan students (Alloway et al 2004, Khoo and Ainley 2005, Kilpatrick and Abbott-Chapman 2002, DEEWR 2010). Low academic achievement also often influences entry to VET before school completion for Indigenous students; Indigenous students are more likely to seek options that require minimal post-school training and education, typically because of a lack of confidence in their academic ability (Lamb et al 2004, Craven et al 2005). James (2002) also found that low SES students were less confident than their high SES counterparts that their academic results would be good enough for entry into courses that might interest them, although this lack of confidence does not significantly affect their performance once enrolled. Students from low SES and rural backgrounds are also less likely to see a relevance between university study and the careers they are interested in; they are more likely to believe that a TAFE course would be more useful and rewarding (James et al 1999, James 2002). The lower Year 12 completion rates for boys from regional areas may be due to increased aspiration for VET rather than school or higher education (Marks and Fleming 1999, DEEWR 2010).

In many studies, the development of aspirations has been linked to family and community attitudes towards further study (James et al 1999, James 2002, Kilpatrick and Abbott-Chapman 2002, James et al 2008, Bok 2010). James et al (1999) found that low SES students were less likely to feel that their parents encouraged them to do well at school or that they often discussed school work with family members. Kilpatrick and Abbott-Chapman (2002) found that the student's mother was particularly important in almost all cases. Several studies (Lamb et al 2004, Craven et al 2005, James and

Devlin 2006, Bok 2010, James et al 2008, Behrendt et al 2012) have found that parents and other family members are eager to assist with their child's education in any way they can, but, having less familiarity with higher education may limit their capacity to help negotiate school and university pathways where no member of the family has previously attended university and in the absence of community role models who have. This may be particularly important in Indigenous communities (Lamb et al 2004, Craven et al 2005, James and Devlin 2006, James et al 2008, Behrendt et al 2012). Teachers in low SES areas may also be less encouraging than those in high SES areas (James et al 1999, James et al 2008, Bok 2010). The effect of college access programs on the motivations of students from low SES backgrounds in the US is reviewed in Harvill et al (2012). Although the authors counsel against drawing strong conclusions from their meta-analysis, they found that measures of completed coursework were the best pre-college indicators of college graduation, and should therefore be included in access program evaluation measures. They also found sharp differences between the estimated effect sizes of programs that used a quasi-experimental design and randomised controlled trials, suggesting that quasi-experimental designs may not be effectively identifying causal impacts, and that care should be taken when interpreting programs of this nature (Harvill et al 2012).

Many Indigenous students and students from low SES and rural backgrounds choose to enter VET instead of university—another example of alternate aspirations, and perhaps of differences in academic achievement. For that reason, informing the aspirations of VET students about the opportunity to progress to university after VET is another important pre-access initiative (in conjunction with having clear VET-HE pathways, discussed in the next section). The Bradley report highlighted the importance of enhancing the pathways between VET and university in meeting participation targets for higher education (Bradley et al 2008, p. 212). Stanwick (2006) found that nearly 9 per cent of students aged under 25 commencing higher education in 2003 had a diploma or above, while over 30 per cent of commencing students aged 25 and over had a diploma or above. Thus, some mature aged students, as well as younger students, are using diplomas as a stepping-stone to higher education. In some fields of education, such as banking and accountancy, half of VET diploma graduates aged under 25 go on to university (Stanwick 2006; Wheelahan 2009). However, the effectiveness of these pathways in mobilising educationally disadvantaged students into higher education has been questioned.

Bradley et al (2008, p. 43) observed that the socioeconomic composition of VET students undertaking the high level diplomas and advanced diplomas required to transfer to university study is similar to higher education students. That is, groups that are under-represented in higher education are not entering pathways that could ultimately allow them access to university, perhaps due to a number of structural and individual barriers (Aird et al. 2010). This finding was confirmed by Wheelahan (2009), who found that, in general, VET pathways were not functioning as a mechanism for redressing socioeconomic disadvantage in higher education. While 10.3 per cent of students in VET were enrolled in diplomas or above, only 6.8 per cent of students from low SES backgrounds were enrolled in these qualifications, as opposed to 10.8 per cent and 13.9 per cent of students from middle and high SES backgrounds respectively, and the percentage of low SES students progressing to university is not significantly different to the percentage of low SES students currently in higher education (Foley 2007; Wheelahan 2009). Conversely, low SES students are over-represented in low-level VET qualifications that do not make them eligible to transfer

to universities (Foley 2007, Wheelahan 2009). This may therefore present an opportunity to inform VET students about the courses that will allow them access to higher education, and to engage in outreach to make university relevant, achievable and valuable for these students.

VET pathways also do not provide equal access to all universities. While there is some variation, in general, Group of 8 universities admit 23 school leavers for every one prior VET student, while other universities admit just over three school leavers per prior VET student (Wheelahan 2009). Dual-sector universities, however, have dramatically increased the percentage of VET articulators as part of their commencing domestic undergraduate students "through conscious policy commitment" (Wheelahan 2009), although this may not hold for Indigenous students (Behrendt et al 2012).

Taken together, these data indicate that VET pathways are an under-utilised route for addressing social inclusion aspirations for educationally disadvantaged groups. Further work is required to increase the proportion of students from low SES backgrounds undertaking diploma and higher-level VET studies before these pathways will generate a significant change in the socioeconomic composition of students transferring to higher education.

2.2 At selection and admissions

This section examines initiatives that promote an individual's access to higher education after graduating from secondary school, by providing financial support and encouragement, and increasing eligibility through alternative pathways.

An intuitive response to increasing university access for students from low SES backgrounds is to provide financial support. As Le and Miller (2005, p. 162) state, "Addressing the socioeconomic imbalance within the tertiary sector in the current era would seem to require equity-based scholarships or university fee rebates to be provided to Year 12 graduates". This view is acknowledged in the Bradley Review (Bradley et al 2008) and the government response (Commonwealth of Australia 2009) through changes to income support payments, HELP schemes and so on, and has shown to be effective (Chen and DesJardins 2008; Carson 2010). People from low SES and non-metropolitan areas are more likely to perceive that there are higher costs associated with university study (Godden 2007, James et al 1999, James 2002, Alloway et al 2004, Carson 2010). Many of the costs are associated with relocation, and, as up-front costs, may be well beyond the income capacity for disadvantaged rural families (James et al 1999). Many are also reluctant to become over-reliant on their parents, which may also reduce their desire to attend higher education (Alloway et al 2004). However, while these initiatives are important and necessary, they do not represent a silver bullet. "This myth is based on the assumption that cost is the principal barrier to access. Cost is a factor, but it is not the only factor" (James 2009).

There is strong evidence from the USA that, in targeting initiatives to reduce financial hardship, how these initiatives are provided has significant effects on their effectiveness. Reviews of the literature by Heller (1997), Jackson and Weathersby (1975) and Leslie and Brinkman (1988), referenced in Heller and Ramussen (2002), have shown that grants have a stronger effect on university enrolment than an equal value of student loans or work study awards, and that educationally disadvantaged students (African American, Hispanic and low income students) are more responsive to these initiatives than White and middle- and upper-income students by a factor of three to four times (Heller 1999; Allen et al. 2005; Hu 2010).

Furthermore, need-based scholarships are successful in promoting access for educationally disadvantaged students, while merit-based scholarships serve only to enforce the status quo. There is a very strong relationship between socioeconomic status and performance in Year 12 which has been observed both in Australia (Cardak and Ryan 2009) and overseas (Heller and Ramussen 2002), which leads to a strong relationship between socioeconomic status and the rate at which students qualify for merit scholarships.

Cardak and Ryan (2009) did not find any significant difference in university participation between students from high and low SES backgrounds who achieved the same ENTER score. However, they also found that the ENTER score students achieved rose with SES status. The difference in ENTER scores between the very highest and very lowest SES scores (as determined by father's occupation) was 10 points. As James (2009) states, "ENTER is not a measure of intrinsic individual intellectual ability. ENTER partly measures the cumulative advantage or disadvantage of family, school and community circumstances… it is a less than perfect proxy for the potential of individuals to thrive in and benefit from university study." Or as Gale (2012) puts it, "the ATAR is more indicative of socioeconomic status than it is of a student's academic potential."

In Heller and Ramussen's (2002) study, a high school in a wealthy suburb of Detroit sent 94 per cent of its students on to some form of postsecondary education before a state-wide merit-based scholarship program was introduced. Sixty-four per cent of those students qualified for scholarships, indicating that at least 58 percent of the scholarships went to students who were likely to attend higher education anyway. In contrast, high schools in poor areas of Detroit had less than 40 percent of their students going on to higher education, and less than 15 percent qualified for the scholarships. Thus, merit-based scholarships did not increase the access of educationally disadvantaged students, whereas providing grants to students on a needs basis may have been more successful. Similarly, initiatives that acknowledge the relationship between SES and ATAR scores to select students for entry to university are important.

2.4 During transition

Moving to higher education can be a very confronting experience. As Hunter (2006) says, "The first college year is not 'grade 13.' Incoming students, whether they come to college from high school or from the world of work, enter a new culture… [with] a foreign set of norms, traditions and rituals, and a new language and environment." This is particularly true for students from low SES and rural backgrounds, who are much more likely than others to believe that their Year 12 studies did not prepare them adequately for first year university (James et al 2010). Academic transition is normally thought of as encompassing orientation in the first few weeks of study and beyond, into the first two or three semesters. There is therefore a large overlap between transition initiatives and initiatives targeting more general retention and success. Unlike initiatives targeting access, transition programs tend to target the cohort as a whole, rather than focusing on specific sub-groups (although Lefoe et al (2002) describe a transition program targeting students from rural backgrounds; programs of this nature may be important in reducing the high attrition rate among students from remote backgrounds).

A great deal of research has been carried out in the area of transition to first year. James et al (2010) conducted a longitudinal survey of the first year experience in

Australia, while Pascarella and Terenzini (2005) provides an overview of the current research from the USA. Because of this large body of literature, good evidence exists in support of transition initiatives.

In Australia, one third of first year students consider withdrawing during the first semester (McInnis et al. 1995; McInnis et al. 2000), often for adjustment or environmental factors—a lack of clearly defined goals, a mismatch with university culture, or feelings of isolation—rather than because of intellectual difficulties (Pitkethly and Prosser 2001). While some factors contributing to withdrawal may be beyond the reach of the university, other factors can be influenced by providing an effective transition experience, and ensuring adequate opportunities and support for students to develop the skills needed for academic success (discussed in Section 2.4; see also Skene and Evamy (2009)).

Effective transition programs have several underpinning objectives (Pitkethly and Prosser 2001, James et al 2008, James et al 2010):

- to familiarise students with the university by introducing them to the physical environment, explaining academic culture and promoting the wider student support services available;
- to develop student's sense of purpose by promoting a clear understanding of the aims, learning outcomes, learning processes, assessment methods and teaching and learning methods of their subjects; and
- to facilitate student's engagement in university life, including engagement with their peers.

Orientation programs typically seek to provide a strong foundation in these principles, which will continue to be built on in first year and later study. Some also include programs on independent living for first year students (James et al 2008).

Orientation programs can also build an "espirit de corps" among new students, providing them with confidence and social support networks to assist with academic and personal support (Twale, 1989). This can lead to enhanced student engagement, which is a particularly important aspect of success in higher education. Engagement motivates students to adopt adaptive strategies that make transition easier (Bean and Eaton 2001; Dennis et al. 2005; Friedlander et al. 2007). Rubin (2006) notes that students from low SES backgrounds tend to be less involved than their middle-class peers in social relations at university. This lack of engagement includes formal activities, such as athletics or clubs and societies events, and informal activities such as socialising with peers on campus. A possible reason for this is the limited time spent on campus generally, perhaps due to the need to work longer hours in casual or part-time employment. Also, as previously discussed, students from low SES areas are less likely to have family members with the necessary experience to provide helpful support or act as role models, although university friends may help cover this gap in family experience (Dennis et al 2005, Friedlander et al 2007, James et al 2010, Rubin 2012).

James et al's (2010) study shows that students at risk of low achievement and failure are less likely to study with other students. Orientation and transition programs can therefore be important in enhancing engagement through providing initial social networks to provide academic and personal support. These sentiments are echoed in Hansen et al (2008). The importance of engagement and cohort construction also has

important implications for academics, particularly those who heavily use e-learning or other dispersed modes of teaching.

While providing appropriate orientation and transition support for equity groups can be beneficial for student engagement and hence retention, the design of the programs will affect the effectiveness of the initiative. For example, "streaming" or requiring additional orientation for educationally disadvantaged students over or in place of what other students do may stigmatise them, counter-productively leading to disengagement.

Beginning familiarisation with academic practices and expectations, perhaps in partnership with the professions for some fields of study, from an early stage can also aid retention. When expectations are communicated clearly, students often find it easier to adjust to the new educational environment (Miller and Pope 2003).

2.5 During an individual's studies

Several commentators, including the Bradley Review and the Federal Government (Bradley et al 2008, Commonwealth of Australia 2009) maintain there is a need for increased support at university for students from equity groups in order for them to be successful. Some (e.g. Tinto 2006) suggest that it is because of the support they have been provided that these students have comparably high retention and success rates. While it is true that educationally disadvantaged students are more likely to enter higher education as mature aged students, and therefore may have increased financial burdens or personal and family responsibilities (Gale 2012, James 2007, Edwards and Coates 2011, Behrendt et al 2012), there is little evidence to suggest that universities with more extensive student support services have better retention rates for any group of students (Gale 2012).

In their study of what low SES students believed to be the most effective factors in their successful completion of first year, Devlin and O'Shea (2011) found that institutional support was ranked after the student's behaviour or attitude and teacher approachability. However, sub-factors relating to institutional support comprised 3 of the top 6 sub-factors overall contributing to success, out of a total of 17. Notably, the factors identified were having high quality online discussion forums (ranked fourth), online learning facilities (fifth) and library services (sixth). While it might be argued that students may not be fully aware of the factors that lead to their success, this demonstrates that institutional support—particularly services that allow students to access their education from home or at convenient times—is important, although not most important, for student success.

Initiatives targeting retention and success, particularly in first year, show a high degree of overlap with initiatives targeting transitions. Several transition objectives—explaining academic culture, clearly articulating the aims, outcomes and methods of a subject, and facilitating engagement with the university and with their peers (Pitkethly and Prosser 2001)—are principles of effective teaching and learning generally, and important for retention and success, not just during the initial transition to university (Ramsden 2003; Biggs and Tang 2011). There is thus an argument for providing adequate support for students to develop the generic and discipline-specific academic skills needed to succeed in their studies.

The provision of student support services seeks to reduce attrition due to hardship and ensure that students are not impeded in their studies by financial or personal conditions. They also seek to improve the student's wellbeing, provide opportunities

for skill-building, increase engagement with the university and enable students from disadvantaged backgrounds to build social capital through participation in activities while at university. Since students from low SES and Indigenous backgrounds are more likely to be mature aged than other students, they are potentially more likely to need to make use of these services (such as childcare facilities) to be able to study. Help with childcare has been shown to be a particularly important factor in success for some students (Zepke and Leach 2010). However, as noted above, they are also less likely to make use of them, perhaps due to a preference for seeking support from personal contacts (including family members and departmental academics rather than general support services), ignorance of service availability, or a lack of a sense of entitlement to these services (Tones et al 2009, Benson et al 2009). Thus, ensuring they are cost-effective, convenient to use and that students are aware of their existence—perhaps using departmental staff as advocates for support services to their students—is important to their success.

3. The recent patterns of access and participation for equity groups

Students in the historically designated equity target groups continue to be disadvantaged in terms of their access to and participation in higher education in Australia. Students with disabilities and students from remote areas have particularly low participation ratios —the ratio of share of places to estimate proportion of the population — at 0.48 and 0.39 respectively, and of the groups examined here, only students from non-English speaking backgrounds are close to achieving population parity, with a ratio of 0.82.

In most cases, participation ratios for equity groups have remained relatively stable during growth in the higher education sector as a whole. While growth in the number of women in non-traditional areas and students from remote areas has fallen, growth in the numbers of Indigenous students, students from low SES backgrounds and students with disabilities has outstripped the expansion of the sector as a whole, which has expanded by 16.4% since 2007, which is used in this report as a pre-Bradley Review baseline. Given the stability of participation rates in the decade before the Bradley Review, the increased participation for these groups is clearly a result of the major systemic changes in the sector, in particular the uncapping of places to create the so-called demand-drvien system.

For students in most equity groups, the ability to complete their undergraduate studies is not significantly lower than the average. As Marks (2007) puts it, “if students from a low socio-economic background get to university, their background does not negatively affect their chances of completing the course” (p. 27). While retention and success rates are lower than average (with ratios of 0.97 and 0.96 of the retention and success rates of total onshore domestic students for low SES students), it is not of the same magnitude as the gap in participation rates.

For Indigenous students and students from remote areas however, the retention and success rates are considerably lower than average, with success rate for Indigenous students being 81% of the average onshore domestic students, and 94% for remote students. Specific initiatives to support the retention and successful completion of these groups may be needed.

3.1 People in equity groups are under-represented in higher education

The underlying aspiration for higher education in Australia is that the composition of the HE sector, and in particular the student body, reflects as near as possible the composition of Australian society. The goal of achieving parity between the composition of university and national populations helps establish aspirational targets and is a widespread conception of equity in higher education (James 2007). This aspiration is the basis for setting enrolment and completion targets for tertiary students in the Bradley Review and *Transforming Australia’s Higher Education System*.

Table 3.1 summarises the numbers of undergraduates in equity groups participating in higher education, as a percentage of the total number of domestic onshore undergraduate students in 2007 and 2011. For comparison, the proportion of

Australians in these groups as a percentage of the total national population is also presented. Values for the total national population are derived from the ABS 2011 results, except where noted.

Also shown in Table 3.1 is the participation ratio for people in equity groups in 2011. The participation ratio is defined as the ratio between the percentage of students in equity groups divided by the total percentage of Australians in these groups. Groups that are participating in representative proportions will therefore have a participation ratio of 1.0. As such, Table 3.1 demonstrates that these groups are indeed under-represented in higher education compared to their incidence in the general population. Women in non-traditional areas, students from remote areas and students with a disability have the lowest participation ratios.

Table 3.1. Number of students in equity groups as a proportion of domestic onshore students, and as a proportion of the Australian population. Also shown is the ratio between the proportion of these groups in higher education in 2011 to the total national population.

Equity Group	2007 (%)	2011 (%)	Australia (2011; %)	Participation Ratio (2011)
Students with a disability[1]	4.32	5.07	10.6	0.48
Indigenous students	1.26	1.38	2.5	0.55
Students from Non English Speaking Background	3.11	3.1	3.8	0.82
Women in Non-Traditional Areas	18.74	17.47	50.6	0.35
Low SES (postcode measure)	16.09	16.76	25.0	0.67
Low SES (CD measure)	-	15.57	25.0	0.62
Regional	18.72	18.63	29	0.64
Remote	1.03	0.91	2.3	0.39

3.2 Most students from educationally disadvantaged groups are no less likely to successfully complete their studies

Successful completion of studies can be measured in two ways. The retention rate measures the number of students who continue their studies from the previous year, as a proportion of the total minus the number of completions. Because of the difficulties in collecting these data accurately, this should be seen as an apparent retention rate; the actual retention rate is likely to be slightly higher than that quoted. The success rate is the proportion of subjects passed by students compared to the total number of subjects undertaken.

No clear trends were seen in the retention and success rates of students in equity groups for the years following 2007; instead, the data had the appearance of somewhat volatile movement around a stable central value. For that reason, the mean retention and success rates over this period were used for comparison. Retention rates for 2011 were not available at the time of this analysis, so the mean was calculated for the period 2007 to 2010; success rates were calculated for the period from 2007 to 2011.

As can be seen in Table 3.2, different equity groups display different levels of educational disadvantage in terms of their ability to successfully complete their studies. While success rates are lower than is the case for total domestic onshore students, in most cases they are not substantially lower. A similar situation is seen in terms of their

[1] ABS 2009; national data exclude profound and severe core activity limitation.

retention rates. Indeed, retention rates for students from non-English speaking backgrounds and women in non-traditional areas are actually higher than the norm. Therefore, students from most equity groups are almost as likely to successfully complete their studies as any other student. This is consistent with previously reported data (Bradley et al 2008, p. 30, Marks 2007, p. 27). Indeed, Bradley et al. (2008, p. 30) report a success ratio of 0.97 for students from low SES backgrounds using the postcode measure, which they describe as having been "very stable" over the last five years. As Table 3.2 demonstrates, the average success ratio for this group is still 0.97, indicating that it has been stable at this point for nearly a decade. Similarly, DIISRTE data indicated that the retention and success rates for students from regional backgrounds have been stable over the last decade.

Table 3.2. Mean overall retention and success rates for students in equity groups, showing the difference to mean retention and success rates for total onshore domestic students. Also shown is the ratio between each group's retention and success rate and that of total onshore domestic students.

Equity Group	Retention			Success		
	Mean	Difference	Ratio	Mean	Difference	Ratio
Students with a disability	78.8	-3.4	0.96	79.2	-5.6	0.93
Indigenous students	69.5	-12.7	0.85	68.3	-16.5	0.81
Students from Non English Speaking Background	85.7	3.6	1.04	81.9	-2.9	0.97
Women in Non-Traditional Areas	83.4	1.2	1.01	84.2	-0.6	0.99
Low SES (postcode measure)	80.4	-1.8	0.98	82.0	-2.8	0.97
Low SES (CD measure)	79.5	-2.7	0.97	81.0	-3.8	0.96
Regional	80.5	-1.7	0.98	84.3	-0.5	0.99
Remote	75.1	-7.1	0.91	79.3	-5.5	0.94
Onshore Domestic Students	82.2	0	1.0	84.8	0	1.0

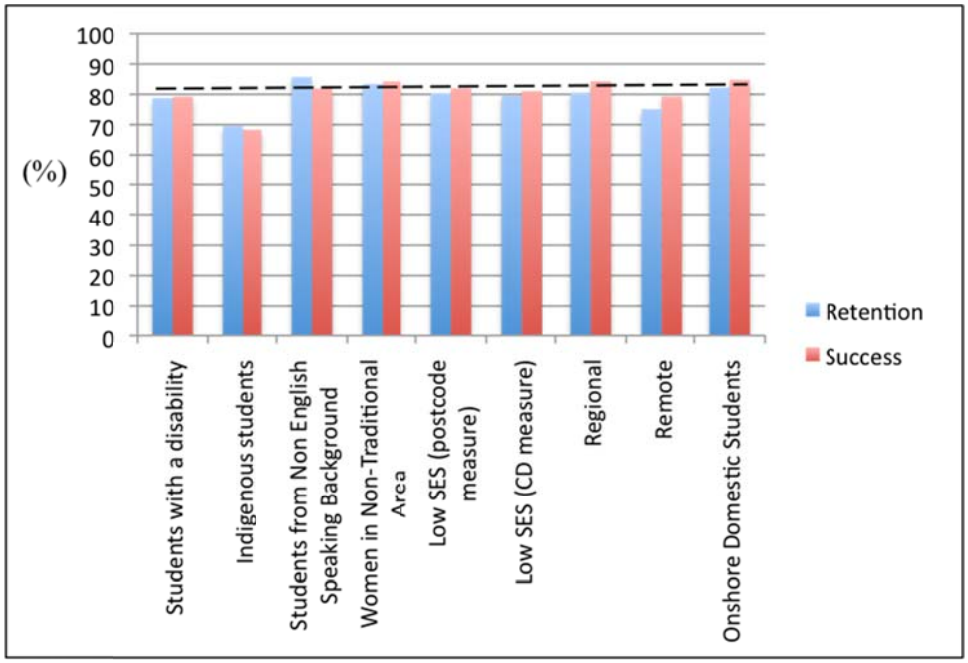

Figure 3.1. Average retention and success rates for students in different equity groups. The dotted line indicates the approximate retention and success rate for total domestic onshore student numbers for comparison.

However, two groups notably do not follow this trend. Indigenous students have substantially lower retention and success rates than the overall average. Students from remote areas are also much less likely to successfully complete their studies than average, although not to the same extent as Indigenous students. These data continue the trend described by Bradley et al (2008, pp. 31-32).

These patterns are particularly obvious in terms of a student's retention and success rates at first year. The first year of a student's studies is known to be the period of greatest risk in terms of retention and success, regardless of any equity subgroup membership. However, Indigenous students and students from remote areas are even more likely to drop out or fail units in their first year than students in other groups, and the risk of them failing units is higher than the risk faced by students in other groups (as shown in Table 3.3 by the ratio between success rates in first year to their success rates across the whole course of study). Thus, while first year is a period of increased risk for all students, it is substantially riskier for Indigenous students and students from remote backgrounds, and even if they can successfully complete first year, these students are still much less likely to complete their studies overall.

Students in other equity groups are slightly less likely to successfully complete their first year of study than average, and have only a slightly higher risk at first year than in late years.

These findings indicate that access and participation are much more pressing issues to redress the under-representation of most equity groups in higher education than retention and success. This is not to suggest that policy should focus entirely on access, but it is clear that the largest disparities emerge from students' ability and desire to enter university in the first place, not from being unable to cope with their work once there. It also demonstrates the falsity of the idea that introducing more educationally disadvantaged students into the system will substantially lower standards; students from equity groups, once at university, are approximately as successful as other students.

Table 3.3. Ratio between the retention and success rates at first year for equity groups and the retention and success rates at first year for total onshore domestic students. The ratio between the retention and success rates for each group at first year compared to the retention and success rates over their whole course of study is also shown.

Equity Group	Ratio to total domestic onshore students at first year		Ratio to overall retention or success rate for group	
	Retention	Success	Retention	Success
Students with a disability	0.97	0.95	0.98	0.98
Indigenous students	0.83	0.78	0.96	0.93
Students from Non English Speaking Background	1.07	0.96	0.99	0.96
Women in Non-Traditional Areas	1.02	0.98	0.97	0.95
Low SES (postcode measure)	0.98	0.96	0.97	0.96
Low SES (CD measure)	0.97	0.95	0.97	0.95
Regional	0.98	1.0	0.97	0.97
Remote	0.90	0.92	0.96	0.94
Onshore Domestic Students	1.0	1.0	0.97	0.96

The notable exceptions to this are Indigenous students and students from remote backgrounds (two groups that have previously been shown to show a high level of overlap—James et al 2004).

3.3 How has the participation of students in educationally disadvantaged groups changed since 2007?

Since 2011, the total number of domestic onshore students has increased strongly, as have the total number of commencing students (Table 3.4). Although the numbers of students in several equity groups have shown similarly strong growth rates, this has not been evenly distributed between all the different equity groups. The number of students from regional backgrounds and non-English speaking backgrounds has kept pace with growth across the sector. However, the growth rate in numbers of women in non-traditional areas and students from remote backgrounds has not, indicating that, if these trends continue, participation ratios for these groups (Section 3.1) will worsen, not improve. Bradley et al (2008, p. 31) reported a similar finding for students from regional and remote backgrounds. DIISRTE data indicates that the proportion of students from remote backgrounds has decreased consistently since the early 1990s, when their participation rate was 1.5 to 1.6 per cent. While the participation rate of students from a regional background has also decreased over that same period, it appears to have stabilised since 2009.

Table 3.4. Change in student numbers in different equity groups over time, in terms of total domestic onshore student numbers and commencing student numbers.

	Total domestic onshore students			Commencing students		
	Increase from 2007	Increase from 2008	Average annual increase	Increase from 2007	Increase from 2008	Average annual increase
Students with a disability	36.69	34.12	8.21	51.13	51.79	11.14
Indigenous students	26.98	25.85	6.20	36.80	29.97	8.17
Students from Non English Speaking Background	16.28	12.28	3.85	23.41	16.76	5.43
Women in Non-Traditional Areas	8.51	8.59	2.07	16.41	15.39	3.89
Low SES (postcode measure)	21.22	19.15	4.95	28.21	25.97	6.48
Low SES (CD measure)	-	18.55	5.84	-	24.95	7.76
Regional	15.82	14.49	3.76	21.55	20.37	5.10
Remote	3.72	7.29	0.95	7.90	11.06	2.03
Total domestic onshore	16.37	14.47	3.87	21.77	20.10	5.09

In contrast to these equity groups, the growth rate of students with disabilities, Indigenous students, and students from low SES backgrounds has outstripped the growth of domestic onshore students as a whole. The average annual increase in the numbers of students with a disability is over double the growth of domestic sector, both in terms of total student numbers and the number of student commencements.

This growth is particularly notable in that the level of under-representation of low SES students had remained virtually unchanged for the decade preceding 2006

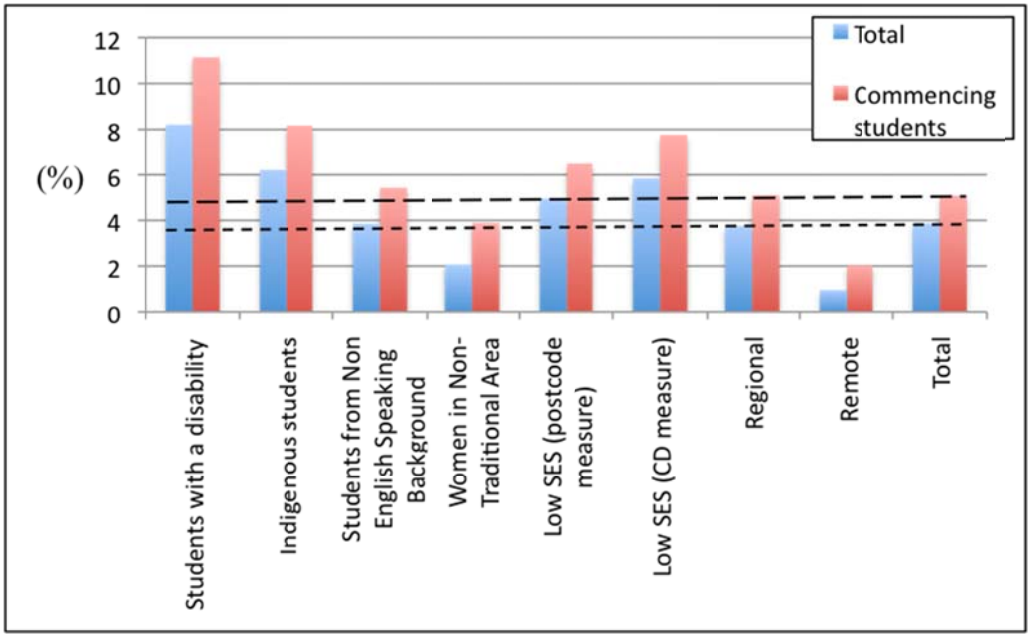

Figure 3.2. Average growth rates in overall and commencing student numbers between 2007 and 2011 (2008 and 2011 for Low SES, using CD measure). Dotted lines indicate the growth rate in the total domestic onshore student numbers.

(James 2007, James 2008). This suggests a systemic effect, perhaps related to the changes made in the sector following the Bradley review and the uncapping of student places, which has induced more students from these groups to enrol in higher education.

Note that the average annual growth rate is not equal to a quarter (or a third) of the total increase from 2007 and 2008 because of annual compounding.

Bradley et al (2008, p. 33) also reported that the access of educationally disadvantaged students, particularly low SES students, was not evenly distributed across the sector. The Group of 8 universities in particular had extremely low participation rates from low SES students, while universities with at least one rural or regional campus had higher access. Since 2007, there has been relatively little change in this pattern.

Bradley et al (2008, p. 34) identified 15 universities as having met or exceeded an access rate of 20 per cent or higher for students from low SES backgrounds: UWS, Victoria, Charles Sturt, Flinders, JCU, Southern Cross, UniSA, Wollongong, Ballarat, New England, Newcastle, USQ, Tasmania, CQU and the Batchelor Institute. The DIISRTE data for 2011 indicates that, while there has been some change in the order, the universities meeting the 20 per cent threshold have not (Table 3.5). This is not to say, however, that there has been no progress in this area. Twelve universities have increased their proportion of low SES students by more than double the sector average of 0.75 per cent. Charles Darwin, Southern Cross, USQ, Flinders, Canberra and Wollongong have shown particularly large increases in their overall proportion of low SES students. Similarly, 9 universities (Charles Darwin, Canberra, Swinburne, Macquarie, Southern Cross, Flinders, Adelaide, RMIT and UNSW) have increased their proportion of low SES students, relative to their 2007 participation rate, by more than double the sector average of 4.68 per cent.

Similar results were seen in terms of the proportions of low SES students commencing in 2011 (Table 3.6). Eleven universities have shown a large increase in the proportion

of students from low SES backgrounds commencing study in 2011 as compared to the proportion commencing in 2007, whereas ten have shown a large increase relative to their 2007 levels. While these results are encouraging, steps must be taken to ensure that these gains are sustained.

Table 3.5. Participation rate of students from low SES background (postcode measure) by institution. Also shown is the percentage change in these values since 2007, both in real terms and as a proportion of the 2007 participation rate.

University	Access rate, 2011 (%)	Change since 2007 (overall, %)	Change since 2007 (% of 2007 value)
ANU	4.25	-0.01	-0.30
UWA	6.22	0.36	6.09
Canberra	6.92	2.38	52.35
Macquarie University	6.96	1.00	16.79
Sydney	7.10	-0.39	-5.26
Melbourne	8.33	0.67	8.75
UNSW	9.96	0.95	10.55
UTS	10.77	0.82	8.25
Swinburne University of Technology	11.49	1.68	17.09
Curtin University of Technology	11.76	0.99	9.24
Edith Cowan University	11.83	0.53	4.70
Monash University	12.24	-0.32	-2.57
ACU	12.97	0.62	5.05
Sunshine Coast	13.89	0.94	7.28
Queensland University of Technology	13.97	-0.07	-0.47
Deakin University	14.06	0.96	7.35
RMIT University	14.53	1.54	11.83
Griffith University	14.82	-0.38	-2.48
UQ	15.14	-0.14	-0.90
Adelaide	15.45	1.73	12.63
Murdoch University	17.32	-0.11	-0.62
Charles Darwin University	17.94	6.85	61.71
La Trobe University	18.61	0.21	1.15
James Cook University	20.49	-1.38	-6.32
Victoria University	21.41	0.76	3.66
Ballarat	22.10	0.64	2.97
Charles Sturt University	22.73	-0.16	-0.68
Flinders	23.26	2.64	12.79
UWS	23.59	1.97	9.11
Wollongong	24.98	2.15	9.44
UniSA	26.04	1.89	7.83
Southern Cross University	26.15	3.26	14.26
New England	26.95	1.42	5.54
Newcastle	27.74	0.81	3.00
Tasmania	32.82	0.66	2.05
USQ	33.83	2.88	9.32
Central Queensland University	45.65	0.35	0.77
Batchelor Institute	48.64	1.92	4.12
Overall	16.87	0.75	4.68

Table 3.6. Proportion of commencing students from low SES background (postcode measure) by institution in 2011. Also shown is the percentage change in these values since 2007, both in real terms and as a proportion of the 2007 commencing student participation rate.

University	Low SES commencements (%)	Change since 2007 (overall, %)	Change since 2007 (% of 2007 low SES commencements)
ANU	4.40	0.13	3.13
UWA	6.88	0.61	9.72
Canberra	7.22	2.58	55.63
Macquarie University	7.55	0.27	3.69
Sydney	7.89	1.13	16.64
Melbourne	9.96	1.03	11.50
UNSW	10.28	0.73	7.69
UTS	10.51	0.93	9.66
Swinburne University of Technology	11.92	0.57	5.03
Curtin University of Technology	12.00	2.28	23.50
Edith Cowan University	12.57	1.28	11.38
Monash University	13.62	0.95	7.52
ACU	13.75	0.50	3.80
Sunshine Coast	14.62	1.10	8.10
Queensland University of Technology	14.76	-0.31	-2.04
Deakin University	15.86	0.52	3.36
RMIT University	16.06	2.09	14.92
Griffith University	16.39	2.70	19.69
UQ	16.51	1.03	6.68
Adelaide	17.71	2.35	15.26
Murdoch University	17.81	-0.83	-4.44
Charles Darwin University	18.58	4.78	34.61
La Trobe University	19.49	-3.85	-16.51
James Cook University	19.53	1.18	6.42
Victoria University	22.00	0.89	4.23
Ballarat	23.43	0.75	3.32
Charles Sturt University	23.80	0.16	0.69
Flinders	23.99	2.64	12.36
UWS	24.44	0.88	3.73
Wollongong	25.30	3.45	15.77
UniSA	25.79	1.42	5.83
Southern Cross University	27.47	0.48	1.77
New England	27.80	3.11	12.58
Newcastle	30.00	1.84	6.53
Tasmania	33.68	0.88	2.70
USQ	35.41	3.16	9.81
Central Queensland University	45.50	-0.64	-1.38
Batchelor Institute	50.71	5.12	11.23
Overall	18.06	1.00	5.86

3.4 Parameters of analysis

This statistical analysis was developed using data published by the Department of Industry, Innovation, Science, Research and Tertiary Education (DIISRTE) for the period from 2007 to 2011. 2007 was chosen as the baseline because data from that year formed the particular focus of the Bradley Report. This analysis can therefore follow trends that were identified in the Bradley review and identify changes that have occurred since then, which may be due to the changes in the sector the review provoked.

In this analysis, equity group categories include only domestic onshore undergraduate students, where onshore is taken to mean the student has a permanent home address in Australia. Students who have an offshore permanent home address are not included, although some of these students might otherwise be included in equity group categories. Percentages are expressed as a percentage of the total number of domestic onshore students, not the total number of students in the Australian higher education system. As the government targets that form the foundation of this report concern undergraduate attainment, trends in postgraduate education will not be examined here.

Also note that individual students may be included in more than one equity group, although they are only counted once in the total domestic onshore students category. In particular, there are considerable overlaps between students of low SES background and other educationally disadvantaged groups. Students from regional and remote areas are over-represented among low SES students, for example (DEEWR 2010), whereas James et al (2004) reported that in 2002, 12 per cent of students of remote backgrounds were Indigenous, compared to approximately 2 per cent of the rural group and 0.8 per cent of the urban group. For this reason, although the terms of reference of this report focus on students of low SES background, this section discussed the current situation of all the major equity groups. Furthermore, it should be remembered that students in these categories are not homogeneous; the needs of a refugee in accessing higher education may be very different to a skilled migrant or a second generation immigrant who speaks a language other than English at home, but all three would be included in the students from a non-English speaking background category.

Two methods were presented for calculating low SES. The postcode measure is based on the 2006 SEIFA Education and Occupation Index for the postcode of the student's permanent home address. Postcodes in the bottom 25 per cent of the population aged 15 to 64 are classified as low SES. This method is widely used, partly because the data is easily accessible and administered, but has attracted a large amount of criticism. It is particularly inappropriate for mature aged students and postgraduates (James 2007).

The CD measure is based on geocoded census collection districts, where low SES census districts are again derived from the 2006 SEIFA Education and Occupation Index for census districts. Districts in the bottom 25 per cent of the population aged 15 to 64 are classified as low SES. The geocoded census district is derived from the home address submitted by the student on their HELP Due file, which may differ from their permanent home address. Data using the CD measure was not available in 2007.

Census districts are much smaller and show less internal SES variation than postcodes, thereby reducing the potential for overestimating the access of low SES students. As the following analyses demonstrate, the CD method typically results in a drop of approximately 1 per cent in participation, retention and success rates compared to the postcode method, indicating that higher SES students in low SES postcodes have better

access and completion rates than lower SES peers from the same area. That is, higher SES people in heterogeneous areas are educationally advantaged compared to lower SES people in the same location, and this effect has led to the overestimation of low SES students in the higher education sector (James et al 2008, Bowden and Doughney 2010).

The use of both methods of SES determination is still based on the assumption that location is the best signifier of the likelihood of educational (dis)advantage. These location-based estimations do not allow for analyses that might separate geographical effects from other socioeconomic effects and are still insufficiently individualised in the way that collecting data based on parents' educational levels would be (James et al 2008). DIISRTE has subsequently changed the way it assesses SES background[2].

[2] (see http://www.innovation.gov.au/HigherEducation/Policy/Pages/MeasuringTheSocioEconomicStatusOfHigherEducationStudents.aspx)

4. Proposed Critical Interventions Framework

In the following critical interventions framework, initiatives are grouped into broad categories by which phase of the student life cycle they target. Within these broad categories, they have been further grouped into types of initiatives, with individual university programs operating at the next level of resolution. These smaller families of programs are typically united by a common purpose, which has been explicated in the second column and discussed in more detail in subsequent chapters. However, as noted below, individual programs within each initiative type may vary in effectiveness due to its unique context, pedagogy and administration.

The following column provides an estimate of the strength of the initiative on a theoretical basis. The next column provides an indication of the amount of the research evidence, if any, that demonstrates that the initiative is effective. That is, whether there is evidence validating an initiative's theoretical strength. In identifying research evidence of a particular initiative, context remains important. Research from the UK and USA—even research from Australia pre-Bradley review—was performed in a different policy and social context, which may affect its relevance to the current situation. For that reason, precedence should be given to contemporary Australian research, of which more should be published.

Evaluation of equity programs and initiatives is hampered by a number of complexities and confounds. Clearly, there are a large number of factors that affect whether an individual chooses to go to university, and whether they are successful once there.

First, there is individual variation. Equity groups are not monolithic; not only do they overlap in complex ways, each equity group is typically comprised of several—again overlapping—subgroups (Willems 2010). For example, the Indigenous students equity group is composed of people from a range of backgrounds—regional, remote, urban, native English speakers versus non-English speaking backgrounds, low SES, medium SES, high SES, and so on. The low SES group, comprising as it does a quarter of the Australian population, is particularly heterogeneous, showing partial overlap with many other equity groups as well as some members that do not. Within those sub-groups, each individual will also be subject to a wide variety of factors affecting their attitudes to and abilities to perform in higher education. This does not mean that population- or sub-group-level strategies cannot be employed, but it does indicate that there is an issue of resolution of measurement—too specific will not generate practically applicable outcomes, while effects may be lost in the noise if too broad a brush is used (Coram 2007).

Similarly, for many initiatives, there are too many variables to control in any rigorously methodological way, which makes establishing causal relationships between initiatives and effects extremely difficult. All attempts to evaluate an initiative or program must be understood within a particular context, which may limit simple adoption of previously successful initiatives. What is effective for one university in one set of circumstances and context may not be so for another. For example, labour market forces in south-eastern Australia may make higher education an attractive destination for individuals of low SES background, but in Western Australia the mining industry may hold the much attraction and reduce the apparent effective of outreach programs in Western Australian schools.

Finally, students are not acted on by individual initiatives. Equity initiatives are typically highly interdependent and are nested within the wider policies and programs of the university. A student making the decision to participate in higher education has their decision mediated by the availability of scholarships and other financial support, course ATAR requirements which may be lowered for someone from their school or background, previous experiences with university outreach programs, and so on. These initiatives function together, making it difficult to separate the effects of each one.

For these reasons, it is highly difficult to identify, and particularly to quantify, the effect of particular initiatives. Even two initiatives that appear broadly similar (that is, fall under the same section of the following framework) may have very different effects due to differences in administration, support, pedagogy and delivery. While we can identify systemic effects, and identify initiatives that we believe are pedagogically sound, it may be impossible to quote a particular effect size for an initiative.

Figure 4.1 presents the broad framework for the typology of equity initiatives presented in the table below.

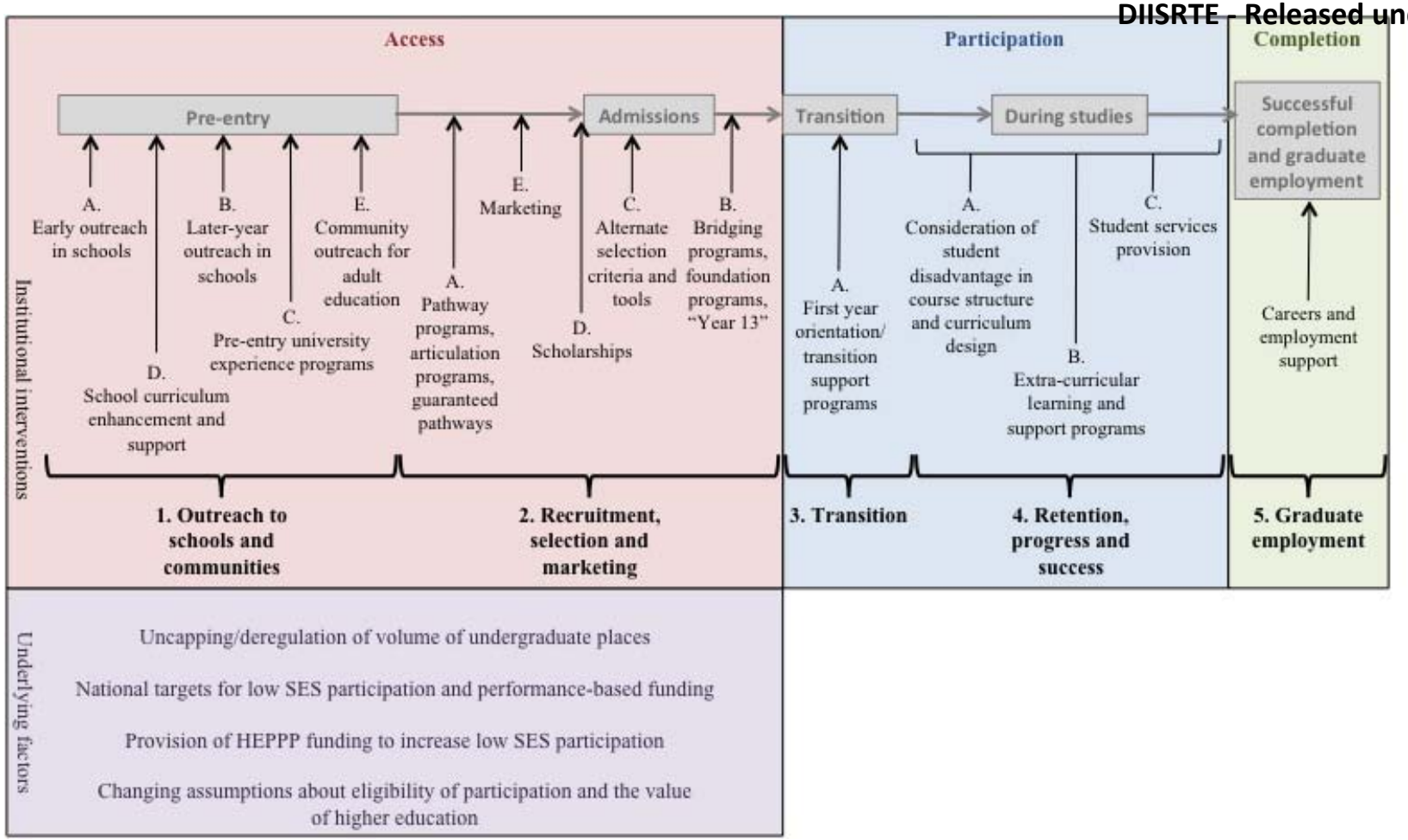

Figure 4.1: Factors leading to increased completion, particularly for students from low SES backgrounds.

Initiative	Purpose	Plausibility (theoretical strength of initiative)	Evidence of effectiveness from research and evaluation	Proportion of total HEPPP funding (%)
1. Outreach to schools and communities				
A. Early outreach in schools (i.e. primary and early secondary) to children and families	- Inform aspirations for higher education - Increase Year 10-12 retention rates - Boost parental involvement and support - Increase teacher support of student aspirations	Strong theoretical basis for effectiveness, particularly if sustained over several years of schooling and if outreach targets all students, not just gifted ones, and parents.	Limited evidence available, and potentially limited evidence achievable. Too many factors affect post-school aspirations and progress to reliably determine their effectiveness. Even if effective, students may not enrol in the institution implementing the initiative, which also confounds the result.	9.4
B. Later-year outreach in schools (i.e. Year 10 to Year 12) to children and families	- Inform aspirations for higher education - Increase Year 10-12 retention rates - Inform subject choices - Inform students of relevant pathways and possibilities - Boost parental involvement and support - Increase teacher support of student aspirations	Some theoretical basis. Student aspirations and academic achievement are often determined by pre-Year 10 achievement, which may limit the effectiveness of later initiatives. May be more effective in informing students and families of pathways to higher education, costs etc.	Limited evidence available from Australia. UK: (Morris and Golden 2005) – proportion of pupils in Year 11 who intend to participate in higher education is 3.9 percentage points higher in schools with Aimhigher than in similar schools without, and have slightly higher GCSE achievement levels, although this was impossible to trace to specific initiatives rather than systemic changes in the participating schools.	11.5

Initiative	Purpose	Plausibility (theoretical strength of initiative)	Evidence of effectiveness from research and evaluation	Proportion of total HEPPP funding (%)
C. Pre-entry university experience programs for schools	- Inform aspirations for higher education - Encourages students to see themselves as university students - Universities seem less intimidating, more relevant to students' lives	Some theoretical basis for effectiveness.	Limited evidence available from Australia. UK: Morris and Golden (2005) – proportion of pupils in Year 11 who intend to participate in higher education is 3.9 percentage points higher in schools with Aimhigher than in similar schools without, and have slightly higher GCSE achievement levels, although this was impossible to trace to specific initiatives rather than systemic changes in the participating schools.	3.9
D. School curriculum enhancement and support	- Increase academic achievement - Increase teacher support of student aspirations	Strong theoretical basis for effectiveness, particularly if support begins early in schooling, is sustained over several years of schooling and targets all students, not just gifted ones.	Some evidence from US: Cunningham et al (2003); Warburton et al (2001) - Academic rigor of students' high school curriculum was strongly associated with their postsecondary GPA, the amount of remedial coursework they took, and with their rates of persistence and attainment. *Early initiatives are more effective* - Good evidence from Australia and UK. *Low SES schools are poorly resourced* – Strong evidence from Australia	0.6

Initiative	Purpose	Plausibility (theoretical strength of initiative)	Evidence of effectiveness from research and evaluation	Proportion of total HEPPP funding (%)
E. Community outreach for adult education	- Inform aspirations for higher education - Inform students of relevant pathways and possibilities	Some theoretical basis. Student aspirations and academic achievement are often determined by pre-Year 10 achievement, which may limit the effectiveness of later initiatives. Combining this kind of outreach with e.g. VET pathway programs, alternate selection criteria for mature aged students etc may be particularly effective	Very limited evidence from the US and Australia.	1.2
2. Recruitment, selection and admissions				
A. Pathway programs, articulation programs, guaranteed pathways	- Increase access for educationally disadvantaged students - Increase aspirations to attend university	Strong theoretical basis for effectiveness.	Strong evidence for the potential efficacy of these programs, but weaker evidence for their current utility. E.g. Foley (2007), Wheelahan (2009) - VET programs currently not acting to increase participation rates for low SES students, except in dual sector universities.	2.4
B. Bridging programs, foundation programs, "Year 13"	- Increase academic achievement	Strong theoretical basis for effectiveness. Academic preparedness/ achievement correlates strongly with retention rates.	Some evidence from the US.	5.8

Initiative	Purpose	Plausibility (theoretical strength of initiative)	Evidence of effectiveness from research and evaluation	Proportion of total HEPPP funding (%)
C. Alternate selection criteria and tools	- Increase access for educationally disadvantaged students	Strong theoretical basis for effectiveness. ATAR has a strong relationship with SES background, which disadvantages otherwise intellectually able students. Alternate selection criteria (e.g. interviews, portfolios) recognises non-academic experience and skills.	Strong evidence from Australia and US.	1.9
D. Scholarships	- Increase access for disadvantaged students - Increase aspirations to attend university	Strong theoretical basis for effectiveness. Perceived cost of higher education is a major deterrent for low SES students, particularly regional and remote students.	Strong evidence from Australia, UK and US.	11.2
E. Marketing	- Increase aspirations to attend higher education	Some theoretical basis for effectiveness.	Some evidence (based on student perceptions of effectiveness) from around the world.	0.3

Initiative	Purpose	Plausibility (theoretical strength of initiative)	Evidence of effectiveness from research and evaluation	Proportion of total HEPPP funding (%)
3. Transition				
A. First year orientation and transition support programs	- Reduce culture shock and increase retention - Familiarise students with the university and available support services - Inform students of academic expectations and success strategies - Increase social engagement with peers - Increase overall engagement with university	Strong theoretical basis for effectiveness, particularly if sustained over the first semester or first year.	Strong evidence from the US, although these may be confounded by highly motivated students volunteering for orientation programs.	7.1
4. Retention, progress and success				
A. Consideration of student disadvantage in course structure and curriculum design	- Increase academic achievement and access to educational support by embedding educational support within curricula - Inform students of academic expectations and success strategies - Reduce burden of attending university by reducing travel time/costs and increasing available time for part-time work	Strong theoretical basis for effectiveness.	Pitkethly and Prosser (2001), (Clerehan 2003), Devlin and O'Shea (2011)	4.7

Initiative	Purpose	Plausibility (theoretical strength of initiative)	Evidence of effectiveness from research and evaluation	Proportion of total HEPPP funding (%)*
B. Extra-curricular learning and support programs	- Increase academic achievement - Increase social engagement with peers through mentoring - Provide individual academic skills development through specialised academic skills staff	Some theoretical basis for effectiveness. Extra-curricular nature may reduce the number of time-poor students making use of facilities. More likely to be effective when used in conjunction with embedded learning support through referrals and early assessment.	James et al. (2010), Clegg et al. (2006), Henderson et al. (2009) *Low SES students make limited use of student support services* – Benson et al (2009), Clegg et al (2006)	9.0
C. Student services provision	- Reduce financial and personal burden of attending university - Increase social engagement with peers	Some theoretical basis for effectiveness. Some student services (e.g. financial aid and childcare) may be essential for some students (making this High). Low SES students are less likely to make use of student services than other students.	Tones et al (2009), Zepke and Leach (2010); strong evidence from Australia and worldwide about the importance of childcare and financial aid *Low SES students make limited use of student support services* – Benson et al (2009), Clegg et al (2006)	12.1

* 18.9% of total HEPPP funding is spent on staff costs, evaluation, research and other costs that are associated with the management of equity programs, rather than the initiatives themselves.

5. Distribution of Higher Education Participation and Partnerships Programs (HEPPP) against the CIF

Key points:

***** The patterns of equity initiatives supported by HEPPP funding are consistent with the structure of the CIF (noting that the information including in the HEPPP reports was obviously not designed for the purposes of the present study and thus has limitations).

***** 49.3% of the total HEPPP funding is spent on pre-entry initiatives; 34.5% on post-entry initiatives and 16.2% on costs associated with the management of equity programs.

***** Broadly speaking, if program management costs are removed, approximately one-third of the HEPPP funding has been spent on initiatives in outreach to school and communities; another third on recruitment, selection and admissions and transition programs; and another third on retention, progress and support.

***** The highest proportion of HEPPP funding was spent on the provision of student services, scholarships and later-year outreach to schools. These initiatives also had the largest number of institutions operating programs of these types.

***** The lowest proportion of HEPPP funding was spent on marketing, school curriculum enhancement (an initiative with high plausibility and some evidence of effectiveness), and outreach for adult education.

An initial broadbrush analysis of the institutional expenditure of HEPPP funding to support equity initiatives, based on the 38 institutional reports, indicates that approximately half of total HEPPP funding is spent on pre-entry initiatives: that is, those that operate prior to individuals entering higher education. Approximately a third is spent on post-entry initiatives, while the remainder is typically spent on management costs associated with the equity programs. In general, the majority of this funding was used to support programs with a reasonably high degree of theoretical effectiveness. However, initiatives of some types that are potentially effective currently have less institutional activity than their potential might indicate.

In 2011, across the Table A higher education providers, 49.3 per cent of the total HEPPP funding was spent on pre-entry initiatives; 34.5 per cent of the total was spent on post-entry initiatives, and the remaining 16.2 per cent spent on costs associated with the management of equity programs (such as administration costs, costs associated with staff that could not otherwise by classified under one of the other categories, and research and evaluation of programs) (Table 6.1). This analysis includes only the expenditure from HEPPP-funded projects, and only contributions made from the HEPPP scheme, rather than contributed by the institutions or other partners. Equity programs that are funded by institutions without the use of HEPPP funding were not included in the analysis. Furthermore, as previously noted, there is significant overlap between several categories; outreach programs, for example,

frequently target both early- and later-year secondary students, potentially confounding the figures we have derived. As such, the figures should be considered indicative, rather than comprehensive. Both HEPPP A and HEPPP B funding is included.

Across the sector, the highest proportion of HEPPP funding used to fund initiatives was spent on the provision of student services, scholarships, and later-year outreach to schools, with significant contributions also being made to early outreach to schools and extra-curricular learning support. Consistent with this, these initiatives also had the largest number of institutions operating programs of that type. These initiative types are also the highest funded per institution with programs of that type; many institutions are making large investments in these initiatives, both in terms of their individual HEPPP allocations, and in terms of overall HEPPP funding for the sector as a whole.

Table 6.1: Amount of HEPPP funding spent by Table A higher education providers in 2011 by initiative type (as a proportion of the total expenditure, and as a proportion of the total less program management expenditure programs. Also shown is the number of institutions operating one or more programs of each type)

Initiative category	**Proportion of total HEPPP spending**		**Number of institutions with programs of that type**
	(%)	**Less program management expenditure (%)**	
1: Outreach to schools and communities	***26.9***	***32.2***	***37***
1A (Early outreach)	9.4	11.2	27
1B (Later-year outreach)	11.6	13.9	31
1C (Pre-entry university experience programs)	4.0	4.8	17
1D (School curriculum enhancement/ support)	0.6	0.7	9
1E (Community outreach for adult education)	1.3	1.6	12
2: Recruitment, selection and admissions	***22.4***	***26.7***	***38***
2A (Pathway programs)	2.6	3.1	16
2B (Bridging programs)	5.9	7.1	19
2C (Alternate selection criteria)	2.0	2.4	10
2D (Scholarships)	11.6	13.8	24
2E (Marketing)	0.3	0.3	5
3: Transition	***8.0***	***9.5***	***23***
3A (Orientation and transition support)	8.0	9.5	23
4: Retention, progress and support	***26.5***	***31.6***	***35***
4A (Curriculum design)	4.4	5.2	18
4B (Extra-curricular learning support)	9.4	11.2	26
4C (Student services provision)	12.7	15.2	30
5: Other spending (e..g program management)	***16.2***	***0***	***28***

The initiatives that show the least HEPPP expenditure (as well as the lowest number of institutions with initiatives of this type) are marketing, school curriculum enhancement, outreach for adult education, alternate selection criteria, and pathway programs. It is understandable that some of these initiatives might not attract or require a large amount of HEPPP funding; instituting alternate selection criteria, for example, may require little funding, and many universities will cover any costs associated with this from alternative funding, rather than from HEPPP. However, the strong theoretical basis for effectiveness of programs that enhance or develop school curricula may indicate that there is an opportunity to fund programs that more fully exploit this type of initiative.

The analysis of HEPPP reports reinforces the case for consistent and detailed evaluation of equity programs and their effectiveness and efforts to build strong causal associations between equity initiatives and improved access, participation, retention, success, attainment and employment. It is recognized that some initiatives particularly outreach programs and more so early outreach programs, may be highly difficult on which to collect data for sound program evaluation. However, as a sector, equity researchers and practitioners should be encouraged and supported in raising the sector's dialogue around the establishment of common approaches for evaluating programs in a rigorous and sophisticated manner, as in Harvill et al (2012) and Bailey and Alfonso (2005).

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Australian Government

Department of Industry, Innovation, Climate Change, Science, Research and Tertiary Education

Moving to an Enhanced Indicator of Higher Education Students' Socio-economic Status

Discussion Paper

April 2013

I. Contents

1. Introduction

In *Transforming Australia's Higher Education System*, the Government announced its intention to improve the participation of students from low socio-economic status (SES) backgrounds in higher education to 20 per cent of all domestic undergraduate students by 2020. At the same time, it stated that better indicators of the SES of higher education students would be investigated, such as circumstances of individual students and their families. This was in response to concerns that the existing 'postcode' method, which assigns SES according to a student's home postcode, was an inexact indicator.

After consulting with the higher education sector, the Australian Government developed an interim indicator to better capture the multi-dimensional nature of SES. The interim indicator of low SES is based on two components:

- the number of domestic undergraduate enrolled students whose home addresses are in low socio-economic Census Collection Districts (CDs) based on the Socio-Economic Indexes for Areas (SEIFA) Index of Education and Occupation (IEO); and
- the number of recipients on selected Centrelink student income support payments.

The CD component is assigned a weight of 2/3 and the Centrelink component a 1/3 weight. The low SES interim indicator is calculated at the institution level. The low SES interim indicator is used to allocate funding in the participation component of the Higher Education Participation and Partnerships Program (HEPPP), and to measure universities' performance against agreed Performance Funding targets for low SES domestic undergraduate enrolments.

The higher education sector has informed the department that it is unable to replicate and validate the Centrelink component of the interim indicator and is therefore hindered in providing higher education opportunities to low SES students. As such, the department has undertaken research to inform the development of a final indicator of SES. This paper explores other dimensions of SES, such as parental education attainment, and its applicability and relevance to a final indicator.

The second section of the paper discusses the sector's response to the Discussion Paper, *Measuring the Socio-economic Status of Higher Education Students*. The third section of the paper examines the suitability of continuing with the low SES interim indicator for use in the allocation of HEPPP funding. The fourth and fifth sections discuss replacing the Centrelink component of the indicator with either

individual SES measures of parental education attainment or secondary school background. The sixth section examines the use of a single area-based measure in a final indicator after the Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) transitions from CDs to Statistical Area 1 (SA1). The paper concludes by recommending that the final indicator of low SES use only the SEIFA IEO classification of students' home addresses at the SA1 geographical level.

2. Sector Response to *Measuring the Socio-economic Status of Higher Education Students*

In December 2009, the Government released a discussion paper *Measuring the Socio-economic Status of Higher Education Students.* The paper aimed to encourage discussion in the Australian higher education sector about how to define and measure SES. In total, 66 submissions were received in response to the paper from a wide range of higher education stakeholders.

The paper identified that any new measure of the SES of higher education students must have the following characteristics:

- Construct and predictive validity – so that any new measure reflects what it purports to measure. In this case measures should reflect the likelihood of educational disadvantage of a student.
- Transparency – measure is open for scrutiny and readily understood.
- Reliability – results from the measure should be consistent over time. This may be impacted by non-response bias.
- Makes the best possible use of existing data sources.
- Collected and analysed cost-effectively and provides information in a timely manner
- Minimises intrusion for the respondent.

The discussion paper also outlined four elements of SES that could potentially be incorporated in a final indicator. These were parental education, parental occupation, income and community or area of residence. In general, submissions supported individual and geographical background elements in an indicator of SES, provided it met the characteristics mentioned above. This is consistent with the proposition that SES is a multi-dimensional concept.

The sector's primary concern was that the use of a geographical measure based on students' postcodes was inexact due to the heterogeneity of populations living within relatively large geographical areas. However, there was general support for the retention of a geographical measure of community disadvantage in developing an indicator of SES. Most submissions favoured the use of smaller CD level data. CDs cover smaller geographic areas and are more homogenous than postcodes. As such, CD level data provides a more accurate reflection of student SES background.

It is evident from the submissions that there was general support for the use of parental education data. Most submissions supported the use of this data in developing an SES indicator, as its collection was scheduled from 2010 onwards and would not involve additional costs for universities. However, some submissions did caution against over reliance on parental education as it only captures one element of the multi-dimensional concept of SES. The robustness and validity of parental education data is further examined in this paper.

Some submissions also supported the use of parental income/occupation data as it has been shown to be a strong indicator of both the social and economic aspects of SES and a strong predictor of higher education participation. While this data is not currently collected, the parental income dimension of SES is considered in the Centrelink component of the interim indicator. Due to the additional administrative and cost burden associated with the collection of parental occupation data, and the intrusiveness for respondents, this option is not explored further.

Submissions also commented that the socio-economic classification of secondary schools attended by higher education students should be considered for inclusion in an indicator of SES. This option is considered in more detail in this paper.

Concerns were raised in submissions that information on parental education and school background may not be appropriate as a measure of the SES of mature age students since the influence of school and parental background is considered to wane over time. This issue is discussed in relation to both of these measures in this paper. It is worth noting that these concerns apply to a significant number of students as over 21 per cent of commencing domestic undergraduates were 25 years and older in 2011.

Some submissions raised the issue of which SEIFA index should be used for measuring the SES of higher education students with some suggesting that the Index of Relative Socio-Economic

Disadvantage (IRSD). The IRSD focuses on low income, low educational attainment and unemployment and may have advantages over the IEO measure (currently employed). The suitability of SEIFA indexes is considered in section three below.

3. Interim Indicator of Low SES

The low SES interim indicator is a composite of two measures. As such it does not represent a distinct count of students. It therefore can only be used as an indicator of the number of low SES students at the institution, state or national levels and is generally expressed in percentage terms.

The first component consists of domestic undergraduate students whose home addresses are in low socio-economic CDs. CDs are classified into SES categories based on the 2006 ABS SEIFA IEO. Each CD is assigned a SEIFA score and those ranked in the bottom 25 per cent (quartile) of the Australian population aged 15-64 years are classified as low SES. CDs in the middle two quartiles are classified as medium SES and CDs in the top quartile are classified as high SES.

The second component consists of recipients on selected Centrelink student income support payments. The following Centrelink recipients are included if at the end of September in the relevant year they are:

a) a recipient of dependent Youth Allowance (full time students) with recorded parental income under the parental income threshold ($45,900 in 2012, $44,500 in 2011, $43,500 in 2010 and $42,200 in 2009);
b) a recipient of dependent ABSTUDY (Living Allowance) with recorded parental income under the parental income threshold;
c) a recipient of independent ABSTUDY (Living Allowance) and qualified for independence on criteria other than workforce participation;
d) an AUSTUDY recipient;
e) a Pensioner Education Supplement recipient;
f) an ABSTUDY Pensioner Education Supplement recipient: or
g) a recipient of ABSTUDY Away from Base (in the relevant calendar year).

The low SES interim indicator is used to allocate funding in the participation component of the HEPPP, and to measure universities' performance against agreed performance targets for low SES domestic undergraduate enrolments.

Appropriateness of the SEIFA IEO

The SEIFA IEO includes census variables relating to the educational attainment, employment and vocational skills of people in a region. This index is currently used by the department to determine the SES of higher education students. Using an ABS SEIFA Index provides a cost-effective, non-intrusive measure of the SES of higher education students.

The other SEIFA Indexes include the IRSD; the Index of Relative Socio-economic Advantage and Disadvantage (IRSAD); and, the Index of Economic Resources (IER). The IRSD focuses primarily on disadvantage and does not include variables associated with socio-economic advantage. It is derived from Census variables such as low income, low educational attainment and unemployment. As it does not include factors associated with socio-economic advantage, this Index does not provide a measure of relativities at the high end of the SES spectrum. The IRSAD is a continuum of advantage (high values) to disadvantage (low values), and is derived from Census variables related to both advantage and disadvantage. This provides relativities at both the high and low ends of the SES spectrum. The IER focuses on the financial aspects of advantage and disadvantage and includes census variables relating to residents' income, housing expenditure and assets.

Any of the SEIFA Indexes could potentially be used to identify low SES students. The two disadvantage/advantage Indexes could also be used to indicate the degree of community disadvantage and any locational aspects of SES. In March 2012 the ABS released a paper exploring the statistical robustness of the SEIFA indexes. The SEIFA indexes were found to be generally robust against removing a CD or small group of CDs or a variable from the indexes when assessing the effects on the ranking of CDs. However, some particular CDs were more affected than others, although the most disadvantaged and least disadvantaged CDs tended to be more resistant to ranking changes. Analysis conducted by the Centre for the Study of Higher Education provides some insight to the issue of the appropriate choice of SEIFA index in measuring the SES of higher education students. Correlations between the IEO and IRSD measures and individual level SES measures (parental education and occupation) were found to be broadly similar. This suggests there is no strong evidence for a need to move away from the IEO.

Appropriateness of Centrelink Component

The Centrelink component provides a proxy for the number of students from low income backgrounds at each institution. Differences in participation rates by SES have often been attributed to differences in the economic capacity of families to support their children through higher education. The economic capacity of families is best measured through indicators of wealth of the household. As wealth is a difficult indicator to measure, income levels, as measured through parents' income, are typically used as a surrogate measure. Most studies find that there is a high correlation between family wealth measures and educational participation and attainment. The information captured in the Centrelink component supplements the aggregate level area data encapsulated in the SEIFA IEO.

Centrelink unit record data is not available to universities due to privacy issues. As such, institutions are unable to replicate and validate this component of the low SES interim indicator nor identify university applicants or students that fall within the Centrelink component. Because the interim indicator is used as a basis for determining funding allocations under the HEPPP and Performance Funding programs, universities have complained that their inability to identify students within the Centrelink component reduces the effectiveness of these funding programs.

Another issue to consider is the Centrelink component's susceptibility to fluctuations in income support policy. Changes to relevant Centrelink payments reduce the validity and reliability of Centrelink data, and may make comparisons over time difficult. For example, the proportion of domestic undergraduate students who received selected Centrelink payments increased slightly from 11.8 per cent in 2009 to 11.9 per cent in 2010. This increase was in line with the 0.2 percentage point increase in the CD component (up from 15.3 per cent to 15.5 per cent). However, following changes to income support arrangements in 2010, the Centrelink component increased by 0.5 per cent from 11.9 per cent in 2010 to 12.4 per cent in 2011. By comparison, the CD component only increased by 0.2 percentage points over the same period.

4. Secondary School Background Data

The inclusion of information on school background was supported by a number of submissions in response to the December 2009 discussion paper. The socio-economic classification of schools may be used as an indicator of community disadvantage. For example, the Australian Curriculum, Assessment and Reporting Authority (ACARA) utilises a measure of SES known as the Index of Community Socio-Educational Advantage (ICSEA). ICSEA is a scale that represents levels of educational advantage.

Information on school background may assist universities in identifying and providing opportunities to students from low SES backgrounds. This information may also aid universities in developing effective partnerships with schools to encourage low SES students to pursue higher education. It is widely accepted that SES is closely correlated with high school completion rates and high school performance e.g. ATAR. Evidence shows that year 12 completion rates are significantly lower for low SES students than for students from middle and high SES backgrounds. Low SES students are also over-represented in weaker ATAR results. These factors combined result in fewer university applications from low SES students. In 2012, 18.6 per cent of all TAC applications were from low SES applicants, compared with 49.1 per cent from medium SES applicants and 30.5 per cent from high SES applicants (a further 1.8 per cent were applicants whose postcodes did not have a SEIFA value, such as those with residential addresses outside Australia).

Although secondary school data can provide useful information it does have its limitations. An index that ranks schools by SES will be based on the communities from which schools draw their students. School catchment areas can be quite large and their populations diverse. The relative heterogeneity of SES backgrounds in some school populations means that school background may not be the most accurate measure of the SES. School background data may also be less relevant in determining the SES of mature age students as the influence of school background on SES may diminish over time. It is important to note that many students enter universities as mature age students with 21 per cent of commencing undergraduate students in 2011 being aged 25 years or older (up from 18 per cent in 2009).

School background data would need to be collected from university applicants and/or commencing students. Accordingly, school background data would not be available for existing students who had

commenced their studies prior to school background data being collected. Comprehensive data would become available as commencing student cohorts progress and existing students complete their studies. However, it would be a number of years before school background data would be available for all enrolled students.

The collection of school background data would be an addition to current university reporting requirements. It would also involve the adoption or creation of a suitable list of school codes and a corresponding index of SES (such as ISCEA). Accordingly the value of adding a school background component to a final low SES indicator needs to be weighed against the additional burden associated with collection, coding and institutional reporting of school background data.

5. Parental Education

Submissions to the December 2009 discussion paper supported the inclusion of a parental education measure and this is supported by research showing a link between parental education and participation and achievement in higher education. Two new data elements were introduced to the Higher Education Student Statistics collection in 2010 in order to collect information on parental education, one element for each of two parents/guardians. Parental education data is only collected for commencing higher education students. Over time this will be more widely available as successive cohorts proceed through their courses. Therefore, if it is to be included in the final indicator it will be necessary to assume that the parental education background of students who commenced from 2010 is representative of the parental education background of all higher education students. This means that the parental education measure will only be available at institution rather than individual level until such time as parental education has been collected for all higher education students.

Similar to school background data, there is an issue about the appropriateness of a measure of parental education as an indicator of the SES background of mature age students. First, the influence of parental and family background might be expected to wane over time. A further consideration is that the parents of some mature age students will have grown up in an era where lower education levels were more prevalent. As such, a parental education measure would be picking up generational impacts.

Analysis of Parental Education data

The department's analysis of parental education data reveals that in 2011, 77 per cent of domestic commencing undergraduate students have known values of parental education for one or both parents (response rate), which is an increase from 69 per cent in 2010. Fifteen per cent of applicants provided no information and eight per cent did not know the highest level of education attainment for one or both parents. Out of 38 Table A universities, six universities recorded a student response rate of less than 50 per cent for parental education data items. Prior to the incorporation of parental education data into a final SES indicator, universities and the department would have to work together to improve student response rates for the parental education fields. The current response rate reduces the validity and reliability of parental education data.

While a small number of universities have applicants that provide low student response rates, the remainder of universities have relatively high student response rates (around 80-90 per cent). To assess the quality of 2011 parental education data, the department eliminated data from those institutions with a response rate of less than 50 per cent and then calculated the correlation between the parental education data and the CD component of the low SES interim indicator for commencing students.

From the table below it can be seen that in 2011, out of the four parental education categories, the strongest correlation is between the number of students in low SES CDs and the number of students whose parent(s)' highest educational attainment is below Year 12 (0.89). The high correlation between the parental education data and the CD component suggests that both measures are very similar, hence the parental education data may not be adding any more value to the low SES indicator than that provided by the CD component. As such, including parental education data in a final indicator does not appear to be warranted.

Table 1: Correlation between parental education and Low SES Census Collection District data, 2011, Domestic undergrad commencing students, Table A universities with response rates of above 50 per cent

	Bachelor and above	VET Certificates, Assoc Degrees, Diplomas	Year 12	Below Year 12
Maternal parental education	0.18	0.54	0.57	0.86
Paternal parental education	0.14	0.68	0.60	0.86
Combined parental education	0.23	0.72	0.67	0.89

6. Transition from CDs to Statistical Area 1 (SA1s)

In response to the higher education sector's concern that the use of postcodes as a community measure of SES was inadequate, the department incorporated CD data in the interim indicator. Populations within CDs will tend to be more homogenous than those in postcodes. Submissions indicated strong support for the use of CD data over postcodes.

Australian Standard Geographical Classification

In July 2008 the ABS announced that the Australian Standard Geographical Classification (ASGC) would be replaced by the Australian Statistical Geographical Standard (ASGS). The new ASGS is designed to produce high quality statistics and will provide either comparable or better quality statistics for most census geographies.

The ASGS uses Mesh Blocks as the building block for this new geography. The Mesh Block is the smallest unit within the new ASGS. Their boundaries are contiguous and cover the whole of Australia without gaps or overlaps. There are approximately 347,600 Mesh Blocks. SA1s is the first level of aggregation of Mesh Blocks into a standard output geographic unit. SA1 has been designed for use in the Census of Population and Housing as the smallest unit for the processing and release of Census data. It is population based rather than household-based, as is the case with CDs. The new SA1 unit should more accurately reflect the regions it is designed to represent.

SA1s Compared to CDs

Overall, there are 54,791 SA1s compared with 38,697 CDs, a difference of 16,094 or 41.6 per cent. The Australian Capital Territory will experience the largest percentage change (67.9 per cent) partly due to the expansion of Gungahlin where 2006 CD boundaries no longer reflect its increased population. New South Wales, Victoria and Queensland will experience a change of around 44-50 per cent while the Northern Territory will experience a change of just 5.9 per cent.

Table 2: SA1 and CD numbers by states and territories

State	No. of SA1s (ASGS)	No. of CDs (ASGC)	Difference (No.)	Difference (%)
NSW	17,895	11,967	5,928	49.5
Vic.	13,339	9,311	4,028	43.3
Qld	11,043	7,673	3,370	43.9
SA	4,091	3,247	844	26.0
WA	5,512	4,371	1,141	26.1
Tas.	1,450	1,069	381	35.6
NT	541	511	30	5.9
ACT	920	548	372	67.9
Total*	**54,791**	**38,697**	**16,094**	**41.6**

*Excludes Other Territories
Source for SA1s: 1270.0.55.001 - Australian Statistical Geography Standard (ASGS): Volume 1 - Main Structure and Greater Capital City Statistical Areas, July 2011

SA1s generally have a population of 200 to 800 persons, and an average population of around 400 persons for urban areas and 300 persons for rural areas. By comparison, each CD has a population of approximately 500 people.

Although there are more SA1s than CDs nationally, SA1s may be bigger than CDs in terms of area and may consist of a few CDs especially in regional/remote areas. This is in line with the main purpose of the ASGS which is to disseminate geographically classified statistics. CDs under the old ASGC were designed mainly as a suitable workload for a census collector. For example, a CD in remote Australia may span a large land area but only have 20 persons in its population. An SA1 requires a sufficient population so that robust statistics can be disseminated at that level, hence an SA1 may consist of a number of CDs with small populations.

The main impact of the transition to ASGS is that the CD will no longer be the base geographical unit for SEIFA analysis; the new ASGS structure to be used in its place is the SA1. Given the design criteria

for SA1s compared to CDs, the ABS expects that SA1s will better capture the socio-economic characteristics within areas i.e. be more homogenous than CDs. That is, because SA1s more clearly define urban and rural areas, small rural towns and discrete Indigenous communities, the amount of diversity within SA1 areas may be reduced.

There are 38,697 CDs nationally, around 12 times the number of postcodes (3,272). As CDs are more homogenous than postcodes, a 1.3 percentage point difference between the low SES postcode measure (17 per cent) and the CD component of the interim indicator (15.7 per cent) was observed in 2011. By contrast, there are 54,791 SA1s, approximately 1.5 times the number of CDs. As the relative difference between the number of SA1s and CDs is much smaller than the difference between the number of CDs and postcodes, it is expected that a SA1-based low SES indicator will be slightly lower than the current CD-based interim indicator.

7. Recommendation

The department recommends that the final indicator of low SES use only the SEIFA IEO classification of students' home addresses at the SA1 geographical level. It is recommended that the Centrelink component be excluded and parental education and school background should not be used in the final indicator. This recommendation reduces the complexity of the current composite measure and does not involve additional costs or reporting requirements for universities and TACs.

This paper has explored existing and potential elements that could be used in a final indicator of low SES. It examined the advantages and disadvantages of:

- the CD and Centrelink components of the interim indicator;
- school background;
- parental education; and
- SA1 level data (based on SEIFA IEO).

The Centrelink component of the interim indicator provides a proxy for the number of students from low income backgrounds at each institution, and the SEIFA CD level data encompasses variables relating to the educational attainment, employment and vocational skills of people in a particular region. The detailed individual information captured in the Centrelink component supplements the aggregate level area data encapsulated in the SEIFA IEO. However, Centrelink unit record data is not available to universities. Consequently, universities are unable to take action to recruit and retain

students on the basis of the Centrelink component. The paper also notes that the Centrelink component is susceptible to changes in income support policy, affecting the consistency of results over time.

School background as a dimension of SES has been considered as a replacement for the Centrelink component. The socio-economic classification of schools may be used as an indicator of community advantage/disadvantage. However, the addition of a school background data element may add a significant burden to university reporting requirements. Given the school background data would be collected from commencing students, it would take a number of years before comprehensive data would be available. This data may also be less effective in determining the SES of mature age students considering the influence of school background diminishes over time.

Research shows that parental education attainment is a strong predictor of student participation in higher education and attitudes towards school and post-school options. Moreover, parents with higher levels of education are more likely to have available resources to support their children's attendance at university. Similar to school background data, there is an issue about the appropriateness of using parental education as a measure of SES for mature age students given the influence of parental background may wane over time.

Parental education data collected to date reveals a low student response rate which reduces the validity and reliability of the data. However, analysis of data from institutions with relatively high response rates suggests there is a high correlation between low parental education and home addresses in low socio-economic CDs. This suggests that the parental education data substantially aligns with the SEIFA IEO as a measure of SES, and that addition of parental education is unlikely to add significant value to a final low SES indicator.

The final option examined in this paper is a measure of low SES based on SA1 data (utilising the SEIFA IEO). The ASGS, which replaces the ASGC, employs SA1 units instead of CDs. The SA1 is designed to more accurately reflect regions it is designed to represent. SA1 is population-based and requires a sufficient population so that robust statistics can be disseminated at that level. It is expected to better capture SES because populations within SA1s are more homogenous. That is, SA1s more clearly define urban and rural areas, small rural towns and discrete Indigenous communities.

The Department is of the view that using geographical data at the SA1 level (based on the SEIFA IEO) would be the most suitable measure of SES based on the criteria outlined at the beginning of this paper. SA1 data will better discriminate between low, medium and high SES than CDs, thereby providing a valid and reliable measure of SES. Analysis of parental education data supports the validity and reliability of SEIFA IEO as a measure of educational disadvantage associated with SES.

Question for Discussion

- *Does a SEIFA IEO measure based on SA1s meet the characteristics of a good measure of SES outlined in this paper?*
- *Is a SEIFA IEO measure based on SA1s an appropriate final indicator of SES?*

8. Appendix – References

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Australian Government

Department of Industry, Innovation, Climate Change, Science, Research and Tertiary Education

TOWARDS A PERFORMANCE MEASUREMENT FRAMEWORK FOR EQUITY IN HIGHER EDUCATION

Summary of a project conducted by the Australian Institute of Health and Welfare

Equity in Higher Education Policy Forum

30 April and 1 May, 2013

Contents

Context

To fulfil its ambition of improving access and equity in the higher education sector, the Australian Government has invested in equity programs that support universities' efforts to widen participation. These equity programs target specific groups that are underrepresented in higher education, including Indigenous Australians, those from low socioeconomic status (low SES) areas, people who live in regional and remote areas, and those with disabilities. The Government has set a target that by 2020, 20% of domestic higher education enrolments at the undergraduate level will be students from low SES areas.

To understand whether equity outcomes are improving it is necessary to have a method of measuring those outcomes. A comprehensive performance measurement framework for equity outcomes in higher education is needed. Regular measurement of progress, or lack thereof, combined with evidence about the most effective equity interventions, is critical to bringing about change in equity outcomes.

In this context the Department commissioned the Australian Institute of Health and Welfare (AIHW) to develop a conceptually-based performance measurement framework for equity (MFE) in higher education.

Development of the MFE

The task that the Department set the AIHW was to use the National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Performance Framework as a model for developing a similar, three-tiered, performance measurement framework for equity in higher education. The measurement framework was to include equity outcomes, determinants of equity outcomes, and indicators of system performance.

Following an analysis of similar measurement frameworks, the AIHW has developed an initial version of a conceptually-based measurement framework for equity in higher education. It can be used to monitor progress in achieving equity outcomes and that can form a starting point for consultation with the higher education sector and other key stakeholders. The framework was developed using two stages.

Stage 1: The four phases of the student education cycle

Four key phases in the university education of students were posited:

- Pre-entry phase (aspirations and enrolments)
- Offers, acceptance, and enrolment
- Experience during university
- Post-graduate outcomes

A series of proposed indicators was developed to match on to the specific inputs, outputs, and outcomes for each of these four phases, along with suggested data sources. The approach yielded 56 indicators across the four phases. Acknowledging the significant reporting burden already experienced by universities, the proposed set of indicators requires little additional reporting by universities.

Stage 2: The three-tier model

The second stage supplemented the indicators from Stage 1 with indicators that focused on precursors of higher education attainment, and to reorganise the phase-related indicators into a three-tier model based on the structure of the National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Performance Framework. The proposed tiers for the MFE in higher education are:

- Tier 1—Educational attainment and outcomes
- Tier 2—Precursors of higher education attainment
- Tier 3—Educational system performance

Tier 1 focuses on educational attainment and outcomes for students in the higher-education sector and includes measures of domestic undergraduate enrolments and completions as well as post-graduation outcomes (23 indicators).

Tier 2 includes measures of the precursors of higher education attainment, such as school performance and aspirations (9 indicators), while Tier 3 focuses on the efforts and strategies of the university and government sectors to improve equity outcomes, such as outreach strategies, financial support, and support strategies during university (29 indicators).

Each of the proposed indicators would be disaggregated by equity group where data permit (low SES, Indigenous, regional/remote, disability status, non-English speaking background) and year.

The final proposed MFE for further consultation thus includes a total of 61 indicators across the three tiers: 9 input indicators, 20 output indicators, 27 outcome indicators, and 5 precursor indicators.

For ease of reading of subsequent parts of this document, the current commonly-used equity performance indicators are described in Box 1.

Box 1: Definitions of commonly used equity performance indicators

Access rate	number of students in an equity group commencing university as a percentage of all commencing domestic students
Participation rate	number of students in an equity group enrolled as a percentage of all domestic students enrolled
Retention rate	number of students in an equity group who re-enrol in a given year as a percentage of domestic students who were enrolled in the previous year (less the number who completed their course)
Success rate	Equivalent Full-time Student Load (EFTSL) of units passed as a percentage of all EFTSL of units attempted
Completion rate	number of students in an equity group that complete a course in a given year as a percentage of completions among all domestic students

Stage 1 detail: Four phase, student education cycle stage

Phase 1: Pre-entry

The first step in meeting the equity targets for higher education enrolment is to increase applications to attend university from people from low SES backgrounds, regional and remote areas, Indigenous Australians, and those with disabilities.

To achieve this goal, universities are receiving funding to address barriers through community partnership programs, academic preparation, mentoring, and by offering alternative pathways into university that do not rely on a particular ATAR score or on transitioning immediately to university from high school.

The proposed indicators (Table 1) cover two inputs (amount of funding; the number of planned programs or activities), four outputs (number and types of activities or programs run; two measures of the extent of the reach of the programs or activities; and the number and type of alternative pathways into university that are offered). These indicators are essential for capturing where efforts are being targeted and the extent of their reach.

Seven of the proposed outcomes measure whether there is subsequent change in aspirations or applications to university from equity groups. Improvements in these indicators over time would signal that the investment and effort from the Government and universities may be having some effect (although they would not be the only factors responsible). If applications from members of equity groups do not increase then efforts might need to be shifted or refocused.

Phase 2: Offers, acceptances, and enrolment

The second step in meeting the equity targets for higher education enrolment is to increase offers, acceptances and enrolments of people from low SES backgrounds, regional and remote areas, Indigenous Australians, and those with disabilities.

To meet this goal universities are using a range of strategies, including the use of alternative entry criteria or pathways, and providing financial, academic, and social supports to students from equity groups.

The proposed indicators (Table 2) for this phase include three inputs (amount of funding; the number of planned programs or activities; planned equity targets at the university level), two outputs (number of activities or programs run; the extent of the reach of those programs or activities), and eight outcome variables focusing on the change in offers, acceptances, enrolments, and the percentage of universities meeting their enrolment targets.

Phase 3: University experience

Phase 3 focuses on students' experiences at university. Universities have received funding through the Higher Education Participation and Partnerships Program, the Higher Education Disability Support Program, and the Indigenous Support Program to provide programs and supports to university students from underrepresented groups so as to improve their overall experiences at university and lead to greater success, retention and completion rates (Table 3). The strategies universities use include tutoring, social support, additional supports for students with disabilities, ensuring that coursework is culturally relevant, and addressing the culture at the university to ensure that it is socially inclusive.

The proposed indicators for this phase include two inputs (amount of funding; number of planned programs or activities), 10 outputs, and six core outcome variables focusing on the change in success rates, retention rates, completion rates, and student satisfaction with support.

Phase 4: Post-graduate outcomes

Phase 4 focuses on post-graduate outcomes to ensure that they reflect positively on the investments (financial, time, etc.) that students have made in obtaining an undergraduate degree (Table 4). Post-graduate outcomes are particularly important for students from underrepresented groups, not just in

terms of fairness and equity in general, but also for the social impact of affecting aspirations in families and communities.

Universities use several strategies to improve the post-graduate outcomes of all their students, as well as students from underrepresented groups. These strategies include the provision of career counselling and pathways, traineeships, internships, and promoting post-graduate study opportunities.

The proposed indicators for this phase include two inputs (amount of funding; number of planned programs or activities), four outputs, and six outcome variables focusing on employment and graduate study in the short and long term post-graduate study.

Table 1: Proposed indicators for Phase 1: Pre-entry (includes secondary school students and mature age/non-school leavers)

Goal 1: *Increase aspirations of attending university among underrepresented groups*

Goal 2: *Increase applications to university from underrepresented groups*

Process: Universities will identify underrepresented groups/communities and address existing barriers to university awareness, aspiration, and application through effective community partnership programs such as outreach, academic preparation, mentoring/role modeling, etc… and by offering alternative pathways into university

Type	Measure	Indicator	Justification	Data source(s)	Level at which indicator can be reported
Inputs	Government investment	Amount of funding by type of program (e.g. HEPPP, ISP)	The amount of funding (overall and per university) is a marker of Government priorities and investment in equity measures. Funding levels help determine the number of programs universities can run and their reach.	DIISRTE, yearly beginning 2010	Individual university Jurisdiction By program (e.g. HEPPP) National
	Planned interventions and priorities	The number and types of interventions by source of funding and target equity group	Documenting the types of supports universities planned to deliver will allow comparisons between universities as well as paint a national picture of types of programs, policies, and priorities which will also help identify gaps.	DIISRTE, 3 yearly mission-based compacts Special grants funding cycles	Individual university National Jurisdiction By type of intervention/program By target group
Outputs	University implementation of partnership building programs	The number and type of partnership activities by type of program and target group	These data represent what universities were able to achieve in practice. They can be compared to what was proposed and provide an aggregate view of target groups and type of strategies.	University reports to DIISRTE, yearly	Individual university National By type of activity (e.g. mentoring, outreach) By target group
	Reach of the partnership programs	The number of participants taking part in or affected by the activities, by type of activity and target group	These data are essentially for monitoring progress and setting realistic expectations – if students/schools/communities are not participating in the programs, then they are unlikely to have any effect on the desired outcomes.	University reports to DIISRTE, yearly	Individual university National By type of activity (e.g. mentoring, outreach) By target group
		Proportion of students who attended a university information session at a	This indicator captures changes in time across the population and from the	LSAY	National By equity group

		university or by a person from the university.	students' perspective.		
Type	**Measure**	**Indicator**	**Justification**	**Data source(s)**	**Level at which indicator can be reported**
Outputs (continued)	Provision of alternative pathways to university	Types of alternative pathways offered into university (e.g. direct application, bonus ATAR points for target groups, entry from TAFE or pre-university prep course)	This indicator provides a summary of the type of pathways offered by universities which has been linked with increasing access and participation.	Not currently collected as part of any collection, but available from universities	University National By type
Outcomes	Aspirations	Proportion of students who were influenced by University representatives who visited their school	Captures whether outreach programs actually affect students	LSAY	National Jurisdiction By equity group
		Proportion of 15 year olds who intend to apply to university after finishing school	Captures whether there has been change in aspirations for attending university among both students and parents –key policy goals for the universities and the Government	LSAY	National Jurisdiction By equity group
		Proportion of 15 year olds whose parents want them to apply to university after finishing school		LSAY	National Jurisdiction By equity group
		Proportion of 15 year olds who expect to complete a university degree		LSAY	National Jurisdiction By equity group
	Applications	Proportion of year 12 students who apply to university by equity group	Increasing applications from members of equity groups is a key precondition for increasing enrolments. This indicator focuses on year 12 leavers, while the following focuses on proportions of all applicants.	DEEWR University Applications and Offers (for number of year 12 applications), yearly; ABS NSSC for denominator, annual (DEEWR from 2008; NSSC from 1984)	National Jurisdiction
		Proportion of total applications by equity group		DEEWR University Applications and Offers data collection, yearly	University National Jurisdiction

Proportion of applications by type of application pathway	Captures the extent to which students from equity backgrounds are taking advantage of alternative pathways.	DEEWR University Applications and Offers data collection, yearly Tertiary admissions centres Detailed data will need to be collected from universities	University National Jurisdiction

Table 2: Proposed indicators for Phase 2: Offers, acceptances, and enrolments (includes Year 12 and non-Year 12 applicants)

Goal 1: *Increase offers made to applicants from underrepresented groups*

Goal 2: *Increase acceptances of offers made to applicants from underrepresented groups*

Goal 3: *Increase enrolments of students from underrepresented groups*

Process: Universities will increase offers made to applicants from underrepresented groups through the use of alternative criteria or pathways, and provide supports which will increase acceptances and enrolments of students from equity groups.

Type	Measure	Indicator	Justification	Data source(s)	Level at which indicator can be reported
Inputs	Government investment	Amount of funding by type of program (e.g. HEPPP, ISP)	The amount of funding (overall and per university) is a marker of Government priorities and investment in equity measures. Funding levels help determine the number of programs universities can run and their reach.	DIISRTE, yearly beginning 2010	Individual university Jurisdiction By program (e.g. HEPPP) National
	Planned policies for increasing offers, acceptances and enrolments	The number and types of agreed-upon equity focused interventions by source of funding and target equity group	Documenting the types of supports universities planned to deliver will allow comparisons between universities as well as paint a national picture of types of programs, policies, and priorities which will also help identify gaps.	DIISRTE, 3 yearly mission-based compacts Special grants funding cycles	Individual university National Jurisdiction By type of policy By target group
	Targets set by universities for increasing enrolments by equity group	Low SES target Other equity group chosen and target	Essential for measuring progress against low SES target at the university level. The distribution of other groups targeted paints a picture of where priorities/gaps are.	Reward Funding agreements	Individual university By target group
Outputs	Policies and practices for increasing offers, acceptances and enrolments	The number and type of policies or practices by target group (e.g. bonus ATAR points awarded, guaranteed acceptance based on school attended, scholarships, etc.)	These data represent what universities were able to achieve in practice. They can be compared to what was proposed and provide an aggregate view of target groups and type of strategies.	University reports to DIISRTE, yearly	Individual university National By type of policy By target group
		Number of scholarships offered by target group	An increase in scholarships will indicate greater financial support for students from equity groups and may encourage	DEEWR Higher Education Student Collection, yearly beginning 2008 (information on	Individual university Jurisdiction

			enrolments.	Commonwealth scholarships) University Administration Data	National By type of scholarship (Commonwealth vs. University) By target group
Type	**Measure**	**Indicator**	**Justification**	**Data source(s)**	**Level at which indicator can be reported**
Outcomes	Offers made	Proportion of applicants who are made an offer	Current data show disparities in offer rates – students cannot attend if they are not made an offer.	DEEWR, University Applications and Offers, yearly beginning 2008	Jurisdiction National By target group
		Proportion of students who apply and are made an offer by type of application process (e.g. direct, Tertiary Admissions Centre)	Marker of whether the admission process or pathway affects offers made (which are likely to vary by equity group)	DIISRTE, Undergraduate Application, Offers and Acceptance, yearly, direct applications and offers first included in 2010	Individual university Jurisdiction National By target group
	Acceptance of offers	Proportion of applicants who receive an offer and reject it (by equity group and type of application pathway)	Indication of persistent barriers to enrolment and attendance at university	DEEWR, University Applications and Offers, yearly beginning 2008	Jurisdiction National By type of application (TAC or direct) By target group
		Proportion of applicants who defer the offer	Needs to be interpreted carefully – deferral may be made for reasons other than barriers (e.g. gap year, etc.)	DEEWR, University Applications and Offers, yearly beginning 2008 DIISRTE, Undergraduate Applications, Offers and Acceptance, yearly beginning 2008	Jurisdiction National By target group
	Enrolment	Proportion of applicants who receive an offer and enrol (by equity group and type of application)	Key indicator in all frameworks to measure improvements in equity	DEEWR, University Applications and Offers, yearly beginning 2008 Internal university data	Jurisdiction National By target group
		Proportion of enrolments by equity group		DEEWR, University Applications and Offers yearly beginning 2008	Jurisdiction National By target group

	Proportion of universities meeting their low SES targets	Provides a measure of university-level progress towards their goals	Mandatory university reporting for reward funding	Individual universities Jurisdiction National
	Proportion of universities meeting their other equity group target (by target group)		Mandatory university reporting for reward funding	Individual universities Jurisdiction National By target group (other than low SES)

Table 3: Proposed indicators for Phase 3: University experience

Goal: *Increase the success, retention, and completion rates of university students from equity groups*

Process: Universities will provide programs and supports to university students from underrepresented groups that will improve their overall experiences at university and lead to greater success rates, retention rates and completion rates.

Type	Measure	Indicator	Justification	Data source(s)	Level at which indicator can be reported
Inputs	Government investment	Amount of funding by type of program (e.g. HEPPP, ISP)	The amount of funding (overall and per university) is a marker of Government priorities and investment in equity measures. Funding levels help determine the number of programs universities can run and their reach.	DIISRTE, yearly beginning 2010	Individual university Jurisdiction National By program (e.g. HEPPP)
	Planned programs to support students from underrepresented groups while at university	The number and types of agreed-upon equity focused support strategies by source of funding and equity group(s) targeted	Documenting the types of supports universities planned to deliver will allow comparisons between universities as well as paint a national picture of types of programs, policies, and priorities which will also help identify gaps.	DIISRTE, 3 yearly mission-based compacts Special grants funding cycles	Individual university Jurisdiction National By type of strategy/activity By target group
Outputs	University implementation of support/participation programs	The number and type of support/participation activities by type of program and target group	These data represent what universities were able to achieve in practice. They can be compared to what was proposed and provide an aggregate view of target groups and type of strategies.	University reports to DIISRTE, yearly	Individual university Jurisdiction National By type of activity/strategy By target group
	Reach of the support/participation programs	The number and type of students partaking of the services, by type of activity and target group	These data are essentially for monitoring progress and setting realistic expectations – if students are not participating in the programs, then they are unlikely to have any effect on the desired outcomes.	University reports to DIISRTE, yearly	Individual university National By type of activity (e.g. tutoring, support groups, transition to university) By target group

Type	Measure	Indicator	Justification	Data source(s)	Level at which indicator can be reported
		Financial support			
Outputs (continued)		Proportion of students from equity groups receiving scholarships (by source – e.g. university-based, commonwealth based)	Financial constraints are often cited as a barrier to university attendance & retention among students from underrepresented groups – increases in the proportion of students from equity groups receiving financial support may increase retention.	DEEWR Higher Education Student Collection (particularly for Commonwealth scholarships) University administrative data collections (for other scholarships)	Individual university National Jurisdiction By equity group
		Number of equity scholarships awarded	These scholarships are specifically targeted at students from equity groups. An increase in the number of scholarships awarded indicates increased investment as well as met needs.	DEEWR Higher Education Student Collection (particularly for Commonwealth scholarships) University administrative data collections (for other scholarships)	Individual university National Jurisdiction By equity group
		Number and proportion of students receiving financial assistance through Austudy	Recent policy changes improving access to Centrelink student-related funding were partly designed to help improve the retention of students from disadvantaged backgrounds. Increased uptake is a measure of increased financial support.	Centrelink students collection	National Jurisdiction By equity group
		Number and proportion of Indigenous students receiving financial assistance through ABSTUDY		Centrelink students collection	National Jurisdiction
		Number and proportion of students receiving financial assistance through Youth Allowance		Centrelink students collection	National Jurisdiction By equity group
		Flexible study and course delivery			
		Proportion of students enrolled part-time	Differences in the proportions enrolled part-time by equity group may reflect either individual preferences or having to balance work, family, and education.	Higher Education Student Data Collection, annual	Individual university National By equity group
		Proportion of students that study externally or multi-modal	Flexible study options have been proposed as a method for increasing the participation and retainment of students from underrepresented groups, particularly those from regional and remote areas.	Higher Education Student Data Collection, annual	Individual university National By equity group

	Staff diversity	Proportion of staff members who identify as being of Indigenous origin	Reflects level of staff members with whom Indigenous students may be able to identify and level of diversity at the university as a whole	DEEWR Higher Education Staff Collection	Individual university National
Type	**Measure**	**Indicator**	**Justification**	**Data source(s)**	**Level at which indicator can be reported**
Outcomes	Success	Proportion of students who pass a unit that they are enrolled in	This set of indicators represents successful progression through university, and are key outcomes for identifying whether students from equity groups are achieving parity once they commence university.	DEEWR Higher Education Student data collection	National Jurisdiction By equity group
	Retention	Proportion of students who re-enrol in a course in a given year Denominator: number of students enrolled in the previous year minus those completed		DEEWR Higher Education Student data collection	National Jurisdiction By equity group
	Completion	Proportion of students who complete a course in a given year		DEEWR Higher Education Student data collection	National Jurisdiction By equity group
	Completion	Proportion of students who complete a course within 5 years of commencing university study		University administrative data collections	Individual university National Jurisdiction By equity group
	Student satisfaction with student support	Proportion of students satisfied with quality of teaching	Increases in these measures will be indicative of improvements in students' perceptions about the level of support they receive and the quality of teaching. Differences between equity groups and other students may highlight additional gaps.	Australian Graduate Survey - Course Experience Questionnaire (AGS-CEQ): Good teaching scale	Individual university National Jurisdiction By equity group
	Student satisfaction with student support	Proportion of students satisfied with level of student support		Australian Graduate Survey - Course Experience Questionnaire (AGS-CEQ): Student support scale	Individual university National Jurisdiction By equity group

Table 4: Proposed indicators for Phase 4: Post-graduate outcomes

Goal: *Improve the post-graduate outcomes (or returns to higher education) for students from underrepresented groups*

Process: Universities will provide support to undergraduate students from underrepresented groups to support their transition from university into employment or further study.

Type	Measure	Indicator	Justification	Data source(s)	Level at which indicator can be reported
Inputs	Government investment	Amount of funding by type of program (e.g. HEPPP, ISP)	The amount of funding (overall and per university) is a marker of Government priorities and investment in equity measures. Funding levels help determine the number of programs universities can run and their reach.	DIISRTE, yearly beginning 2010	Individual university Jurisdiction By program (e.g. HEPPP) National
	Planned supports to improve post-university outcomes	The number and types of agreed-upon equity-focused programs by source of funding and target equity group	Documenting the types of supports universities planned to deliver will allow comparisons between universities as well as paint a national picture of types of programs, policies, and priorities which will also help identify gaps.	DIISRTE, 3 yearly mission-based compacts Special grants funding cycles	Individual university National Jurisdiction By type of intervention/program By target group
Outputs	University implementation of activities/programs to support post-graduate outcomes	The number and type of activities by type of program and target group (e.g. career counselling, internships)	These data represent what universities were able to achieve in practice. They can be compared to what was proposed and provide an aggregate view of target groups and type of strategies.	University reports to DIISRTE, yearly	Individual university National By type of activity (e.g. career counselling, internships) By target group
	Reach of the post-graduate activities/programs	The number and type of participants taking part in the programs/activities, by type of activity and target group	These data are essential for monitoring progress and setting realistic expectations – if students are not participating in the programs, then they are unlikely to have any effect on the desired outcomes.	University reports to DIISRTE, yearly	Individual university National By type of activity (e.g. career counselling, internships) By target group
		Number and proportion of students that used university careers services as part of their job search strategy	These two indicators provide a student-based measure of use of particular services – can be compared	AGS	University National By equity group

		Number and proportion of students that attended careers fairs or information sessions as part of their job search strategy	with university reports.	AGS	University National By equity group
Type	**Measure**	**Indicator**	**Justification**	**Data source(s)**	**Level at which indicator can be reported**
Outcomes	Post-graduate employment	Proportion of students employed part-time or full-time 4 months after course completion	All four indicators are measures of the short-term and long-term returns to education. These are important markers not only of the "payoff" of university and individual student investment, but they also have symbolic functions as the visibility of the advantages of higher education attainment. Differences in these outcomes by equity group may suggest further intervention at the university level or may require further study.	AGS	University National By equity group
		Proportion of students employed in an area relevant to their course of study 4 months after course completion Denominator: number of students who completed 4 months prior		AGS	University National By equity group
	Post-graduate employment (continued)	Proportion of students employed part-time or full-time 3 years after course completion	All four indicators are measures of the short-term and long-term returns to education. These are important markers not only of the "payoff" of university and individual student investment, but they also have symbolic functions as the visibility of the advantages of higher education attainment. Differences in these outcomes by equity group may suggest further intervention at the university level or may require further study.	BGS	University National By equity group
		Proportion of students employed in an area relevant to their course of study 3 years after course completion		BGS	University National By equity group
	Post-graduate study	Proportion of students studying part-time or full-time 4 months after course completion	Although the primary focus of the equity policies is on undergraduate attainment, inequities persist at the graduate level as well. These indicators	AGS	University National By equity group

	Proportion of students studying part-time or full-time 3 years after course completion	will measure the extent of the inequality as well as whether they decrease over time.	BGS	University National By equity group

Summary of the four-phases

Table 5 provides a summary of the number of indicators across type (input, output, outcome) for each of the four phases and in total.

Table 5: Coverage of proposed indicators by phase and type

Phase	Input indicators	Output Indicators	Outcome Indicators	Total
Pre-entry	2	4	7	13
Offers, acceptance and enrolment	3	2	8	13
University experience	2	10	6	18
Post-graduate outcomes	2	4	6	12
Total	**9**	**20**	**27**	**56**

A total of 56 indicators linked to the four phases are proposed, with a balance between the inputs (funding, plans), the outputs (what universities and the Government are providing and their reach), and outcomes that reflect the equity goals of increasing access, participation, and completion of university education for those from underrepresented groups.

Stage 2 detail: Proposed three-tier performance model

The National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Performance Framework provided an organising context in which to consider health indicators for Indigenous people by developing three tiers of performance measurement. In that model the tiers were:

- Tier 1: health status and health outcomes
- Tier 2: determinants of health status
- Tier 3: health system performance

The AIHW was asked to produce a similar organising context for equity outcomes in higher education that would include precursors or predictors of higher education attainment and would group the inputs, outputs and outcomes identified from the four phases of the student education cycle. The three tiers created for the MFE (see Figure 1) are:

- Tier 1: Educational attainment and outcomes (23 output indicators)
  Contains measures related to access; offers, acceptances and enrolments; university experience; and postgraduate outcomes.
- Tier 2: Predictors of educational attainment (9 output indicators)
  Tier 2 contains measures of predictors of, and precursors to, higher education engagement and attainment (e.g., literacy and numeracy; intention to apply to attend university).
- Tier 3: Educational system performance (29 output indicators)
  Tier 3 contains measures of education system performance as it relates to access; offers, acceptances and enrolments; university experience; and postgraduate outcomes (e.g., data on equity-focussed interventions; use of university career services)

Figure 1: Proposed Performance Measurement Framework for Equity in Higher Education

TIER 1
Educational attainment and outcomes (measured for university, jurisdiction, population)

Pre-entry	Offers, acceptances, enrolments	University experience	Post graduate outcomes
1.01 Year 12 applications	1.04 Offers	1.12. Students who pass	Employment–any job
1.02 Applications	1.05 Offers by process	1.13 Re-enrolments within year	1.18 within 4 months
1.03 Application pathways	1.06 Rejected offers	1.14 completed courses in given year	1.20 within 3 years
	1.07 Deferments	1.15 completed courses in 5 year	Employment–job related to course
	1.08 Offers & enrolments	1.16 Satisfaction with quality of teaching	1.19 within 4 months
	1.09 Enrolments	1.17 Satisfaction with student support	1.21 within 3 years
	1.10 Low SES targets		Study after completion
	1.11 Other equity group targets		1.22 within 4 months
			1.23 within 3 years

TIER 2
Precursors of higher educational attainment

Pre-entry

2.01 Influence of university representatives
2.02 Intention to apply for university
2.03 Parental intent for students to apply for university
2.04 Expectation to complete university
2.05 Vulnerability across developmental domains
2.06 Literacy & numeracy
2.07 School attendance
2.08 YR 12 completions
2.09 ATAR scores

TIER 3
Educational system performance (measured by jurisdiction and university)

Pre-entry	Offers, acceptances and enrolments	University experience	Post graduate outcomes
3.01 Funding by program	3.03 Funding by program type	3.06 Funding by program type	3.08 Funding by program type
3.02 Equity-focussed interventions by funding source and equity group	3.04 Equity-focussed interventions by funding source and equity group	3.07 Equity-focussed interventions by funding source and equity group	3.09 Equity-focussed interventions by funding source and equity group
3.10 Partnership activities	3.05 Low SES target & other groups	3.16 support/participation activities	3.26 activities by type of program and target group
3.11 Participants in activities	3.14 Policies & practices	3.17 Student partaking in services	3.27 participants partaking in programs/activities
3.12 Information session attendance	3.15 Scholarships	3.18 Scholarships by source	3.28 use of university career services
3.13 Alternate pathway types		3.19 Award equity scholarships	3.29 attendance at career fairs or information sessions
		3.20 Austudy	
		3.21 ABSTUDY	
		3.22 Youth allowance	
		3.23 Part-time enrolments	
		3.24 External or multi-	

All indicators measured by Indigenous status, Socioeconomic disadvantage, regional /remoteness status, Disability, Non-English speaking back ground and Year

Australian Government

Department of Industry, Innovation, Climate Change, Science, Research and Tertiary Education

EVENT BRIEF

Minister Bird for Information **Brief No:** BR13-000580

cc: Minister Emerson

Division/Agency: Higher Education

ADDRESS TO THE EQUITY IN HIGHER EDUCATION POLICY FORUM

Event: Equity in Higher Education Policy Forum

Date: 30 April 2013 **Time:** 4:00 pm

Address: The Holme Building (Building A09), Science Road, University of Sydney Camperdown campus

Time Minister is required for: 60 minutes

Recommendation:

1. That you note the information provided. **Noted / Please Discuss**

Minister's signature: **Date: / /**

Key Issues / Sensitivities:

- You are speaking at the Equity in Higher Education Policy Forum where you will announce Higher Education Participation and Partnerships Program (HEPPP) Partnerships funding rounds and Curtin University as the successful applicant to host the National Centre for Student Equity.
- The purpose of the Equity in Higher Education Policy Forum is to begin a consultation process with key equity stakeholders on the development of an equity policy framework for higher education. Key higher education equity stakeholders will be present.
- You will announce that the Partnerships component of HEPPP has been redesigned into three parts: 1) allocation of $36.5 million to universities using the Participation formula, 2) a $50 million competitive grants process, and 3) redirection of the Partnerships baseline funding from 2014 to create a National Priorities Pool. We have previously briefed you on this matter (BR13-000336 refers).
- You will also announce that the National Centre for Student Equity in Higher Education will be hosted by the John Curtin School of Public Policy at Curtin University. Curtin University's application demonstrated a strong commitment to equity, a sound understanding of the government's intended role for the Centre and a strong plan to quickly deliver on the Centre's outcomes.

- There may be some criticism of the HEPPP redesign, particularly the redirection of the baseline funding from 2014 to the National Priorities Pool. However, this should be offset by the fact that most universities will receive more recurrent funding under the new design than they do in baseline funds. The allocation of $36.5 million by formula will reduce red tape for universities and give them the flexibility to fund HEPPP activities as they see fit. It will be important to reassure attendees of the ongoing nature of HEPPP funding.
- The attached speech outlines your support for the development of an equity policy framework for higher education, details the announcements of HEPPP funding and the new location of the National Centre for Student Equity in Higher Education.
- You will also be confirming that the HEPPP is an ongoing program and emphasise the need to work collaboratively to ensure it is well structured and effective.

Clearing Officer: Judith Washington
Higher Education Executive Support Team
(02) 6102 8123
Date: 29/04/2013 13:23

Contact Officer: Clare Boutchard
(02) 6102 9170

Consultation: NIL

Attachments:

Attachment A: Event Summary
Attachment B: Order of Proceedings
Attachment C: Speech - attached separately
Attachment D: Map
Attachment E: Event Guest list - attached separately

Background:

The former Minister for Tertiary Education, the Hon Chris Evans MP, agreed to an equity policy forum as the beginning of a process for developing a comprehensive higher education equity policy framework (BR12-00228 refers). The Equity in Higher Education Policy Forum will bring together key higher education equity stakeholders to commence work on a framework that focuses activity on evidence-based solutions and better aligns equity work in universities with the broader higher education contribution to the Government's productivity agenda as well as the Government's strong social policy focus. Following consultation with stakeholders, a final position paper will be developed and provided to you for consideration.

The National Centre for Student Equity was previously based at the University of South Australia. In 2012, the university advised Minister Evans that it was no longer in a position to continue hosting the Centre and wished to work with the department in the development of new arrangements to ensure that the Centre's important work could continue. Following this, the department consulted with key stakeholders on the best configuration for the Centre to fulfil its role into the future. It was agreed that the Centre should be policy-driven, practice focussed and at the centre of public policy dialogue about higher education equity issues. Following a competitive selection process undertaken by the department, you selected Curtin University to host the Centre.

Program Funding:

HEPPP Partnerships Funding has been redesigned as follows:

1) $36.5 million over 2013 and 2014 to be allocated to universities using the Participation formula;
2) $50 million over 2013, 2014 and 2015 to be allocated via a competitive grants process, with the Department to call for applications on 8 May 2013. This funding was announced in the 2012-13 Budget.
3) Redirection of the annual Partnerships baseline funding ($9.5 million) from 2014 to create a National Priorities Pool.

Talking points:

Media Team have emailed speech to Alison Byrnes.

ATTACHMENT A

EVENT SUMMARY	
Briefing Number	BR13-000580
Event Title	Equity in Higher Education Policy Forum
Purpose	Speak to key equity stakeholders
Date	30 April 2013
Time	16:00
Location	The Holme Building (Building A09), Science Road, University of Sydney Camperdown campus. Please refer to attached map.

Minister Arrival Time	3:55 pm
Minister Departs	5:00 pm
Parking	TBA
Event Contact	Craig Ritchie, General Manager Indigenous and Equity Branch
Organisation	DIICCSRTE
Lectern Available	Yes
Arrangements	N/A
Telephone	
Mobile	0438 670 177
Met by	Craig Ritchie

VIPs and Audience Attending	*A list forum attendees are at Attachment E. No VIPs as such.*
Min Adviser/mobile	Alison Byrnes 0419 878 956
Dept Rep/mobile	Craig Ritchie 0438 670 177

Speech Required	☒ Yes ☐ No
Prepared by	Corporate media team
Speakers	
Key Message/s	• It is timely to develop a new framework for higher education equity policy framework • The Government is committed to increasing the number of low SES students at university and is providing further funding under the Higher Education Participation and Partnerships Program

Running Sheet	☒ Yes ☐ No
Background Brief	☐ Yes ☒ No
Speech Notes	☒ Yes ☐ No
Media Release	☒ Yes ☐ No
Other	Specify e.g. Location map, invite list, conference brochure
Media Notified	☐ Yes ☐ No

ATTACHMENT B

ORDER OF PROCEEDINGS
Equity in Higher Education Policy Forum
4:00 pm Tuesday, 30 April 2013
The Holme Building (Building A09), Science Road, University of Sydney Camperdown

Time	Details	Speaker/Facilitator
3:55 pm (5mins)	Minister Bird arrives at Forum and is greeted by Craig Ritchie	Craig Ritchie
4:00 pm	Minister Bird gives speech	
4:30 pm	Minister Bird answers questions	
5:00 pm	Minister Bird departs Forum	

HON SHARON BIRD MP

MINISTER FOR HIGHER EDUCATION AND SKILLS

The Department media team have sent speaking notes to the Minister's Advisor separately.

ATTACHMENT D

The Holme Building (Building A09), Science Road, University of Sydney Camperdown campus