
INTERNATIONAL
HIGHER
EDUCATION

An
Encyclopedia

— Edited by —
PHILIP G. ALTBACH

International Higher Education

An Encyclopedia

Volume 2



Edited by
Philip G. Altbach

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AUSTRALIA



Australia

Grant Harman

Australia has well-developed systems of higher education and postsecondary education which closely resemble those of other advanced English-speaking countries, especially Britain, Canada, and New Zealand. Degrees and diplomas awarded by its universities and colleges are widely recognized in other countries and some of its research work, especially in medicine and agriculture, is very well regarded internationally. As in a number of other advanced societies, Australia's higher education and postsecondary education systems are currently undergoing major redirection and reconstruction in order to give governments a greater measure of control and to ensure that higher education institutions more closely serve national economic needs.

From the early 1970s until the end of 1988, postsecondary education in Australia consisted of three major and clearly identified sectors: universities, colleges of advanced education (CAEs), and technical and further education schools.¹ Since January 1, 1989, however, the so-called binary line between universities and CAEs has been abolished and these two sectors have been replaced with a new single, combined sector, the unified national system of higher education.

The main emphasis in this chapter will be on universities and CAEs and on the new unified national system of higher education. For well over a decade government authorities in Australia have referred to university and CAE sectors as constituting the country's higher education system, while the term "tertiary education" has been used to refer to postsecondary education more generally, but especially in universities,

CAEs, and technical and further education colleges.

The Three Sectors of Tertiary Education

In 1988 there were nineteen universities, recognized and funded as such by the federal government. They enrolled a total of 194,047 students, of whom 126,141 were studying as internal full-time students. Together they had a total staff of more than 34,000. Except for the Australian National University, located in the nation's capital of Canberra, and established under federal legislation, all universities were state government institutions, responsible to a state minister and parliament. However, except for minor amounts of endowment income and some research grants, all nineteen universities were dependent on the federal government for regular recurrent and capital income. Most students enrolled in universities were studying at the undergraduate level, but in relation to other postsecondary institutions the universities have had a special role in research and postgraduate study. In 1988 about 14 percent of students were studying for higher degrees, about 78 percent for bachelor's degrees, and the remainder for postgraduate diplomas and other awards.

Seen from a distance, the nineteen Australian universities of 1988 all looked very much alike. With the exception of the Australian National University, which was originally established in 1946 as a postgraduate research university, they all pursued similar goals and shared the same dominant values. There was also a high

degree of similarity with regard to organizational arrangements and teaching programs. But a closer view would have revealed a number of important differences. The nineteen universities included six old established universities, such as the University of Sydney (founded 1850) and the University of Melbourne (founded 1853), with their traditional academic organization of departments and faculties, and a wide range of professional schools; the immediate post-World War II institutions, created to be strong technological universities, the University of New South Wales (established 1949) and Monash University (established 1958); the "new" capital city suburban universities of the time, modeled largely on the new British universities of

the 1960s, such as Macquarie University in Sydney and LaTrobe University in Melbourne (both established 1964); the five regional universities, located outside capital cities, such as the University of New England (established 1954), situated in the country town of Armidale in New South Wales; and the Australian National University, which now comprises seven research schools in the Institute of Advanced Studies (based on the original Australian National University) and the Faculties (based on the Canberra University College, which combined with the original ANU in 1960). Table 1 provides a listing of the nineteen universities, showing the date of establishment for each and 1988 total enrollments.

Table 1
Australian Universities 1988

University	Date of Establishment	Total Student Enrollment 1988
University of Sydney	1850	18,236
University of Melbourne	1853	16,733
University of Adelaide	1874	9,177
University of Tasmania	1890	5,376
University of Queensland	1910	18,233
University of Western Australia	1911	10,063
Australian National University	1946	6,651
University of New South Wales	1949	18,706
University of New England	1954	9,427
Monash University	1958	14,768
La Trobe University	1964	13,128
Macquarie University	1964	11,194
University of Newcastle	1965	6,375
Flinders University	1966	6,028
James Cook University of North Queensland	1970	4,244
Griffith University	1971	5,339
Murdoch University	1973	5,196
Deakin University	1975	7,209
University of Wollongong	1975	7,964

Note: This table lists only those institutions recognized by the federal government as universities and funded as such by federal authorities.

Apart from these nineteen universities recognized as such by the federal government and funded through the Employment, Education, and Training portfolio, in 1988 there were a small number of additional universities or university-type institutions. These included the Australian Defence Forces Academy (funded through the Defence portfolio and operated academically as a university college linked to the University of New South Wales), the University College of the Northern Territory (funded by the Government of the Northern Territory and academically linked to the University of Queensland), and Bond University, Australia's first private university, established in 1988 by legislation passed by the Queensland Parliament. In addition, two CAEs had been reconstituted as universities by their respective state governments: Curtin University of Technology in Perth, and the University of Technology in

Sydney. However, up to the end of 1988, these were not recognized by the federal government as part of the university sector.

In 1988 there were forty-four CAEs that as a group enrolled 215,219 students, of whom 120,275 were studying full time. Together the colleges employed a total of almost 25,000 staff. Although the CAEs were originally developed to offer subdegree courses, by 1988 almost 70 percent of college students were enrolled in bachelor's degree and postgraduate courses. CAEs varied considerably in size, from small institutions with a few hundred students and a limited range of courses to large multischool institutions, such as the Royal Melbourne Institute of Technology, which in 1988 had a total of 11,832 higher education students. However, compared to a decade earlier, the average size of CAEs in 1988 was considerably larger as a result of rapid growth in enrollments and numerous amalgamations. Colleges also tended to be more dispersed geographically, with a significant number located in nonmetropolitan areas. Compared to universities, colleges were less homogeneous, varying from highly specialized "single-purpose" institutions to large broad-based institutions similar in many respects to universities. Like universities, CAEs are funded entirely by the federal government for regular recurrent and capital expenditure, but are subject to a much greater degree of control by state governments. Also, unlike universities, CAEs are subject to external accreditation of courses and awards.

The CAE sector developed from the mid-1960s, following recommendations of the Martin Report,² with the aim of diversifying higher education and providing a cheaper alternative to universities, with courses at a lower level and having a more applied and vocational emphasis. The CAE sector grew quickly, responding to strong student demand and with substantial funding provided by the federal government. It absorbed many former nonuniversity

institutions including senior technical colleges, teachers colleges, agricultural colleges, and institutions specializing in music, arts, and paramedical studies.³ Over time, the orientation of most colleges changed, with the introduction of degree studies, the achievement of parity of academic staff salaries with universities, and with the recruitment of academic staff possessing research degrees. By 1988 many of the larger CAEs closely resembled universities, with strong professional faculties and graduate studies, although they were not funded explicitly for research. Clearly the binary line was under strain and challenge.⁴

The technical and further education sector was established in the 1970s, building on a long tradition of technical colleges and mechanics institutes. By 1988 it consisted of a network of 220 major institutions and another thousand annexes and branches, which together enrolled 937,175 students in vocational and technical courses. In addition, another 510,000 students were studying in noncredit adult education courses. In the vocational and technical area, the main emphasis was on courses for basic employment skills, educational preparation, trade and skills, and technician and paraprofessional fields. The main awards were certificates, but since the mid-1980s many TAFE colleges have provided two-year associate diploma courses almost identical to two-year CAE courses. Technical and further education colleges were controlled by separate departments or boards and, while the federal government provided financial assistance, especially for capital works projects, the bulk of funds still came from state (and territory) sources.⁵

Influences on Higher Education

Four main sets of influences have had a major effect on the Australian higher education system. The first set are geo-

graphical, and spring from the fact that Australia is still largely a European-based society, inhabiting a large island continent located in the Asian-Pacific region. The population is relatively small (slightly over sixteen million) with large concentrations in a small number of major seaboard cities, but with a very sparse distribution elsewhere. In the pioneering British societies that developed on the Australian continent in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, higher education developed slowly. Although the first British colony had been established at Sydney Cove in 1788, it was not until 1850 that the first university, the University of Sydney, was established. Even as late as 1939 Australian universities together enrolled just over 14,000 students. Understandably, the early institutions drew largely on British models and experience, although from the start all universities were secular in origin and were established by governments. With strong European cultural ties, Australian higher education institutions continued to be influenced to a major degree by overseas developments and values. Until the 1960s the ties to Britain were close. According to Partridge, pre-1945 Australian universities suffered from considerable isolation from one another, but their ties to Britain were much closer: "Many of the staff were recruited from Universities in the United Kingdom . . . ; most of the native Australian teachers would have done their postgraduate training in a British university; and they usually returned to Britain when their year of sabbatical leave came round. Collectively the universities were dominated by British traditions and practices; they judged themselves by British standards and sought British recognition."⁶ While the ties with Britain have since loosened somewhat, Australian institutions are still influenced to a major extent by overseas developments, especially in Britain, North America, and continental Europe.

From the start, however, Australian higher education institutions have had to

adapt overseas models to suit the particular characteristics of the local scene. This has resulted in a number of important innovations. One example is the development of external studies or distance education courses, designed to serve a scattered population denied access to regular higher education. First established by the University of Queensland in the 1920s and developed significantly by the University of New England from 1955, external studies has become an important element of the Australian higher education scene. About 12 percent of higher education students are enrolled via external studies, and they pursue their courses using printed materials, audio and video tapes, talk-back radio, teleconferencing, individual telephone and written communications, and visits to the campus for intensive "residential schools."

A second influence stems from the distinctive character of the Australian economy. Australia's export income was first based on two commodities, wool and gold, and even today depends largely on a very limited range of products from farming and mining. Within the broad categories of farm products and mining, there has been considerable diversification; major farm exports now include meat, wheat, sugar, and fruit, while mining produces copper, lead, zinc, and antimony, as well as coal and natural gas. Secondary industry was relatively slow to develop and, with the aid of a strong protection policy, until recently mainly served a local market. The consequences for both industry and higher education have been serious. Industry has tended to be conservative and restricted in nature, largely borrowing ideas from abroad, while higher education has been confined mainly to training for the professions and public sector employment. However, over the past decade deliberate efforts have been made to broaden the nation's export base and to reverse a serious imbalance in external trade. This change in overall economic directions has important

implications for the future direction of higher education. If Australia is to be more than a farm and a mine, it will need a broader range of professional expertise and technical skills.

A third influence has come from the distinctive Australian style of federalism. Australia became a nation in 1901, when the six British colonies combined to form the Commonwealth of Australia. The federal constitution specified clear areas of responsibility for the national government; it was assumed that other matters would be the responsibility of state governments. Education was one of the areas it was assumed would remain with state governments, and hence the constitution made no mention of education at all. However, over the years the powers and areas of responsibility of the federal government have enlarged to a major degree.

Despite the lack of a clear-cut specific power relating to education in the constitution, the federal government has become deeply and substantially involved in education at all levels across the nation.⁷ Involvement by the federal government in higher education began in a small way prior to World War II. During and immediately after the war it was forced to come to the aid of the severely overstretched and underfinanced universities. In the late 1950s this involvement was regularized as a system of agreed shared financial responsibility, between the Commonwealth and states. In the 1960s the federal government accepted a similar role with respect to CAEs, while in 1974 it took full responsibility for the regular capital and recurrent funding of all higher education institutions. At the same time, at the insistence of the federal government, tuition fees were abolished. As a result of these developments, by the mid-1970s the federal government had become the major source of initiative in the formulation of higher education policy. At times there have been considerable frictions when federal government and state views do not agree.

The expansion of the federal government's powers in higher education have been achieved through the use of two specific constitutional provisions: section 96, which gives the Commonwealth power "to grant financial assistance to any State on such terms and conditions as the Parliament thinks fit," and a 1946 amendment to the constitution (section 51 xxiiiA) through which the Federal Parliament acquired power to make laws "with respect to the provisions of . . . benefits to students" in all states.

A fourth set of influences relate to student demand for courses. The Australian community has always had a somewhat ambivalent view of higher education. There is a strong thread of anti-intellectualism in Australian society, and Australian universities have often been viewed as being somewhat peripheral to the mainstream of cultural and economic life. But in such an egalitarian society higher education provides one of the main avenues for social advancement and employment security. Since World War II, enrollments have increased substantially. University enrollments increased from 25,000 in 1946 to 53,400 in 1960, to 115,600 in 1970, and to almost 200,000 in 1988. CAE enrollments also expanded, from 37,692 in 1970, to 159,466 in 1980, and to over 215,000 in 1988. The rapid growth rate eased off in the late 1970s, largely as a result of a downturn in the economy, but since 1983 growth has again been steady and sustained. Table 2 provides information on university and CAE enrollments from 1984 to 1988. It will be noted that over this period university enrollments increased by 12.7 percent while CAE enrollments increased by 15.7 percent. The current sustained and substantial growth rate can be attributed to a number of factors, including government action in providing additional student places; particular government policies designed to increase access, especially among women and disadvantaged groups; rapidly increasing "retention rates" in secondary

schools (nationally retention rates have risen from 40.6 percent in 1983 to 57.6 percent in 1988); and strong demand for graduate employment. Despite the substantial increases provided in student places over recent years, annual surveys have found that up to 20,000 potential students per year have been unable to gain places, even though qualified academically for entry.

Recent Trends, Including the Dawkins Reforms

Since the late 1970s Australian higher education has changed significantly. Reference has been made to the leveling off of growth in enrollments in the late 1970s and to the renewed expansion since about 1983. The drop in the rate of increase in enrollments was largely the result of a marked downturn in the economy, and to a loss of public confidence in higher education, especially as a result of a major problem with graduate unemployment in a number of fields. But it was also in part the

result of the policies of the conservative Liberal-National party federal government of the time, led by Malcolm Fraser and in power from 1975 to 1983. The Fraser government attempted to cut public expenditure generally and, under its policy of "New Federalism," attempted to push responsibility for various areas of activity, including aspects of education, back to the state governments. Higher education institutions' budgets were cut, limits were placed on student enrollments in each institution, and an attempt was made to reintroduce tuition fees for second and higher degrees. In addition, to help cut expenditures and deal with a major problem of oversupply of schoolteachers, as part of its "Razor Gang" cuts of April 1981, the Fraser government intimated that thirty CAEs involved exclusively or largely in teacher education had to amalgamate with a larger institution or face loss of federal funding. In the end, after considerable controversy, twenty-six of the specified colleges merged with other institutions.⁸

Early in 1983 a general federal election brought the Hawke Labor government to power. For four years, under Senator Susan

Table 2
University and CAE Enrollments, 1984 to 1988

University	Full-time	Part-time	External	Total
1984	105,480	50,649	15,972	172,101
1985	107,427	51,562	16,487	175,476
1986	110,670	53,211	17,642	181,483
1987	115,774	49,291	15,738	180,803
1988	126,141	51,428	16,478	194,047
CAE				
1984	89,768	67,638	27,289	184,695
1985	96,912	68,516	29,112	194,540
1986	104,575	71,993	31,917	208,485
1987	118,380	64,558	29,993	212,931
1988	120,275	64,337	30,607	215,219

Source: Commonwealth Tertiary Education Commission.

Table 3
**Variations in Student Load
 Operating Grants and Staff Numbers 1976 to 1985**

University	(Percentages)			
	Student Load EFTS	Operating Grants	Academic Staff	General Staff
1976 to 1980	+4.5	+8.6	+6.4	+3.6
1981 to 1985	+9.4	+3.1	+0.1	-0.6
1976 to 1985	+14.4	+11.9	+6.5	+2.9
CAE				
1976 to 1980	+21.7	+19.2	+14.1	+14.8
1981 to 1985	+14.0	+2.9	-1.7	+0.7
1976 to 1985	+38.7	+22.6	+12.2	+15.6

Source: Commonwealth Tertiary Education Commission, *Review of Efficiency and Effectiveness in Higher Education* (Canberra: Australian Government Publishing Service, 1986) p. 37.

Ryan as education minister, the policies of the Fraser government were largely continued, except that deliberate attempts were made to encourage increases in enrollment and the broadening of student access, especially for women and members of minority groups. Enrollments increased substantially, but institutions were forced to become more cost-efficient and additional student load was funded at unsatisfactory marginal rates per student unit. As Table 3 indicates, between 1981 and 1985 the rate of increase in operating grants for higher education institutions was far less than the increase in student load.

In July 1987, following another general federal election in which the Hawke government retained its power, the number of government departments was drastically reduced and John Dawkins became minister in charge of the new "mega" portfolio of Employment, Education, and Training. Dawkins previously held the portfolios of Finance and then Overseas Trade, and was one of a small group of key senior ministers in the cabinet who believed that the Australian economy needed major re-direction in order to broaden the export

base and correct a dangerously adverse balance of trade. Since late 1987 major changes in the higher education system have been initiated by Dawkins; the results have been more far-reaching and dramatic than most observers expected.

In order to secure greater control over policy direction, Dawkins abolished the Commonwealth Tertiary Education Commission, a statutory agency that had been responsible for advising the minister on forward planning and coordination, and administering grants to institutions and states. A "Green Paper"⁹ was prepared and circulated for comment, and this was followed in July 1988 by a "White Paper"¹⁰ that announced major new policy directions. These new directions included abolition of the so-called binary system of separate sectors for universities and CAEs and its replacement by a unified national system; a commitment to extensive amalgamation of institutions and the setting of a minimum limit of two thousand equivalent full-time students units (EFTSU) for institutions in order to gain admission to the unified national system; setting size limits required for institutions to be funded

for research (five thousand EFTSU for some research funding, and eight thousand EFTSU for funding of an infrastructure to enable research activities to be carried out over a broad range of fields); a commitment to major expansion in student numbers and the output of graduates; increases in research funding and greater targeting of research funds to areas of national priority; and reform of institutional governance in order to secure greater flexibility, responsiveness, and accountability. Apart from this, under Dawkins a Higher Education Contribution Scheme or "graduate tax" system has been established in order to help finance the planned student expansion, while important concessions were secured in December 1987 on staffing arrangements in industrial negotiations between the federal government, the higher education institutions, and the academic unions. Further still, external studies provisions have been rationalized and eight Distance Education Centers have been designated. These centers will be specifically funded for external studies teaching, and all other institutions will have to offer external studies courses through them.

Implementation of the Dawkins reforms are well under way. All nineteen universities that were federally funded in 1988 have joined the unified national system, along with many CAEs. However, in many cases membership is conditional upon amalgamations being achieved. By 1990 it is likely that the unified national system will consist of thirty to thirty-five institutions, most with the title of university.¹¹ In New South Wales a state system of six universities and more than fifteen CAEs is to become a system of nine universities. In essence, through a process of forced amalgamations, most CAEs will either be absorbed into existing universities or will become constituent parts of new universities based on a number of former CAEs. A small number of very small CAEs may stay outside the unified national system and be funded at

less generous rates on a contract basis for teaching activities only.

Higher Education and Government

The increasing federal government role in higher education has already been noted. Apart from this trend, two major changes have dominated the relationship between higher education institutions and government over the past four decades. The first is that both federal and state governments have experimented with various mechanisms to provide policy advice and coordination, while the second is a belief by higher education institutions that governments have been interfering more and more in their activities.

In order to cope with rapid growth in the higher education system, to facilitate orderly planning, and to achieve some measure of regulation, first the federal government and then the states set up special coordinating agencies for higher education. In 1956 the federal government appointed a committee, presided over by the chairman of the British University Grants Committee, Sir Keith Murray, to inquire into the future of Australian universities. This committee recommended commitment by the federal government to ongoing financial support for university development on a regular basis, and establishment of an Australian University Grants Committee to provide detailed ongoing advice. The recommendations were largely accepted, although the prime minister, R. G. (later Sir Robert) Menzies, decided to establish an Australian Universities Commission as a statutory body rather than a grants committee.¹² With the establishment of the CAE sector, a parallel advisory and coordinating agency for colleges was established, first as an advisory committee and then later as a statutory commission. A statutory body for technical and further education followed in the early 1970s, and