

26 April 2016

## Joint Statement – embracing future opportunities

The university sector in Western Australia has reached a critical juncture in shaping the way our universities, and indeed our State, will operate and perform in the future.

Colleagues working at universities in WA can rightly feel proud of their contribution to the community and the prosperity of our State.

Education represents Australia's third biggest export earner. International students attending our universities contribute around \$1.2 billion to the WA economy and are a major driver of tourism. More critically, universities contribute immeasurably to our quality of life, the richness of the cultural experience, and, through our commitment to learning, research and innovation, the capacity for our industry, our staff and graduates to be competitive and successful in the international arena.

While our past is something to be proud of, technology and greater mobility is making the world a smaller place. The drive for global competitiveness, changing environments and disruptive technology applies to our sector as much as any other. It's not an individual university issue, it's a global higher education issue.

This is why Western Australian universities have united to ensure that our sector is well placed to make the most of opportunities offered by this changing environment; that we have the agility to genuinely compete with universities and research institutions globally. This is critical for the future prosperity of staff, students and the broader WA economy. The key to success lies in the talents and creative energy of our people, organised and resourced in a way to be able to respond to our changing world.

We recognise the macro trends driving change in the higher education sector locally, nationally and globally. These include: employer expectations that our graduates will be both "work ready" and have the skills to adapt to a changing environment; technology innovation and disruption; increased competition from traditional and new providers; student expectations for personalised and on-demand services; and government policy reforms and significant public funding challenges.

Recently, Pricewaterhouse Coopers consulted with 340 stakeholders across the country and found that the University workforce of the future will need to be increasingly agile and flexible; that we will need to continuously and proactively develop the technical and professional capacity of our staff; and will need to enable greater role specialisation.

We have an opportunity to shape the future of the sector together. WA is fortunate to have a fabulous diversity in each of its universities. Each University will have aspects of its operations that need to be challenged and changed to be ready for the future. However, many of our staff develop careers across multiple institutions and this is why looking at matters from the perspective of the *whole* sector is important. This includes issues like how employment and career paths are shaped.

One requirement all universities share is the need to ensure our skilled workforce is allowed the flexibility to grow and adapt to changing needs. To thrive, we must become more efficient so that we can commit more resources to learning and teaching, research and community engagement.

WA universities are negotiating new enterprise agreements this year. Appropriately each university will engage with its people directly about their own agreement, with the core belief, shared by us all, that our people have the right to industrial arrangements offering protections consistent with the expectations of the broader communities we serve.

Our desire is for agreements that are: *simple, contemporary* and *fair*. We are jointly committed to a common set of principles for change that will support the jobs and careers in our changing sector and our collective future as universities.

*Simple* agreements will be written in plain language that is easy for everyone to understand and apply, only containing content that is needed.


*Contemporary* agreements will ensure our people enjoy conditions that are fitting of a modern Australian organisation and that enable us to evolve as changing circumstances demand. They will protect core academic values while providing flexibility to create a workforce that enables the expansion of our sector to embrace the opportunities that the future presents.

*Fair* agreements will contain terms and conditions that are consistent with the standards of the communities we serve and in line with with the broader economy and the expectations of the taxpayers, students and our other stakeholders.

We accept with enthusiasm the opportunity to work with you to jointly build a platform for our future mutual success.

*Simple. Contemporary. Fair.* Embracing future challenges and opportunities. That is our shared commitment.

Jointly signed,



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