

COUNCILS OF DEANS
OF
AUSTRALIAN UNIVERSITIES

Hon Julia Gillard MP
Prime Minister
PO Box 6022
House of Representatives
Parliament House
Canberra ACT 2600

16 March 2011

Dear Prime Minister,

Australian Learning and Teaching Council Termination

We wrote to you on February 7th, as members of a group of nine Councils of Deans of Australian Universities representing the leaders of university faculties with more than 30,000 academics and most of Australia's 1.13 million university students. We wrote to express our deep concern and dismay at the abolition of the Australian Teaching and Learning Council (ALTC).

We are delighted that you have agreed to restore \$50m of the \$88m that would have gone to the ALTC over the period of the forward estimates, expressly to maintain its grants and programs under the same terms of reference and conditions. It is a clear indication that you understand their value and importance.

However, we urge you to use this development to reconsider your decision.

It was noted during the course of the Senate Estimates hearings that the abolition of the \$300m Capital Development Pool has passed with very little comment, while the abolition of the ALTC has caused a storm of protest not seen since the proposal to omit university teaching explicitly from ministerial portfolio titles. We need to alert you to the fact that the level of outrage and disbelief among university staff at the abolition of the ALTC has not abated with your decision to retain some of its grants and programs.

Academics are in search of reasons for the abolition of the ALTC. They cannot understand how it does other than undermine the standing of university teaching and learning comprehensively. They cannot understand why the strategic directions and developments of the ALTC should be disrupted by establishing another body to do the same things, and for the sake of saving \$38m over four years. They cannot understand why research would be encouraged and recognized via independent statutory bodies such as the ARC and NHMRC, but not teaching, where the bulk of their working hours are spent.

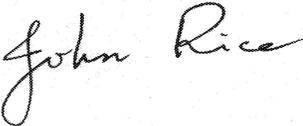
We believe it imperative that you share with us the advice upon which your decision is based, and your vision for how teaching and learning innovation will be encouraged and recognized nationally.

We are not aware of any advice from DEEWR that would prompt the abolition of the ALTC, or answer any of these questions.

We seek a meeting with you or your advisers, so that we can clarify these matters.

Alternatively, may we hope that in reviewing the cumulative effect of recent decisions you can agree that it is not worthwhile to abolish the ALTC at this time. You might instead institute a review to establish its impact and role within the sector and make decisions in the light of the review report.

Yours sincerely



Professor John Rice
Executive Director
Australian Council of Deans of Science

On behalf of:

Australian Business Deans Council (ABDC)
Australian Council of Deans of Information and Communications Technology (ACDICT)
Australian Council of Deans of Science (ACDS)
Australian Council of Engineering Deans (ACED)
Australian Deans of Built Environment & Design (ADBED)
Council of Australian Law Deans (CALD)
Council of Deans of Nursing and Midwifery (CDNM)

Copies to:

The Hon Tony Abbott MP: Tony.Abbott.MP@aph.gov.au
Senator the Hon Kim Carr: senator.carr@aph.gov.au
Senator the Hon Christopher Evans: senator.evans@aph.gov.au
The Hon Christopher Pyne MP: C.Pyne.MP@aph.gov.au
Senator Brett Mason: senator.mason@aph.gov.au
Senator Bob Brown: senator.bob.brown@aph.gov.au
Senator Sarah Hanson-Young: senator.hanson-young@aph.gov.au
Senator Scott Ludlam: senator.ludlam@aph.gov.au
Mr Adam Paul Bandt: adam.bandt.mp@aph.gov.au
Senator Christine Milne: senator.milne@aph.gov.au
Senator Rachel Siewert: senator.siewert@aph.gov.au
Mr Robert Oakeshott MP: robert.oakeshott.mp@aph.gov.au
Hon Bob Katter MP: Bob.Katter.MP@aph.gov.au
Mr Andrew Wilkie MP: andrew.wilkie.mp@aph.gov.au
Mr Tony Windsor MP: Tony.Windsor.MP@aph.gov.au
Senator Nick Xenophon: senator.xenophon@aph.gov.au