

Transcript

Final report overview with Professor Barney Glover AO

SONAL SINGH: To kick off today's event, I would like to introduce Professor Barney Glover. Professor Barney Glover is the Vice Chancellor and President of Western Sydney University and a member of the Australian Universities Accord Panel who had the immense task of putting the final report and all of the recommendations to us in a succinct 400-page document. He is also the appointed jobs and skills Commissioner, we probably will tap into that in some of the questions as we go through.

Over to you, professional Glover -- Professor Glover on the Universities Accord.

PROFESSOR BARNEY GLOVER AO: Thank you for the intro, Sonal. And I know I have only been given 10 minutes, and that is a shocking short amount of time. And I will stick to that. Thank you for your support. I would also like to acknowledge I'm on the land of Darug people. And I would like to acknowledge those of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander descent and it is great to have them on the little later to talk about some of the elements of the report that support our First Nations community, both staff and students within the University. They are very much at the centre of this report, and I'm sure that Leanne will talk more about that.

I'm pleased to talk about the report on behalf of Mary O'Kane. She was keen to be here, and I would like to thank many of you who pervaded great input to the Accord process, submissions, discussions in a variety of ways, and I hope you can see elements of what you said to us in the final report. There may be things to unpack, and there may be things to demystify and things to quibble about, but whatever, I think it is a really important starting point for this discussion today, I am pleased to have the official slide pack from The Commonwealth.

I will move through it quickly, and highlight things, particularly relating to equity. We flicked to the first slide. One thing I would like to emphasise and I will come back to it later in the presentation, it is the national objective, and we spent a lot of time in the panel talking about the national objective for tertiary education if the government accepts the recommendations for it to be embedded, and in other ways embedded in relation to the future of tertiary education as a reference point.

I think as you engage with the Accord as a statement of national objective it is really important, and you might like to consider how many of your comments map against reinforced or in some way may be in conflict with of having a national tertiary education objective, we are keen to promote that as a centrepiece, if you'd like of the Accord itself. These are the chapter headings that Sally and I will... Sally will talk more about her views on this in a moment is a real expert in the sector. As Sally

pointed out to me, this tells a story, and I think they do with the way the chapter headings have been done. I want to highlight a few of them by way of context, it is a 400 page report, there are 47 recommendations. There are a large number of findings as well, as guidance through the narrative. You have to consider this as a package.

Current and future skills needs, we will come back and talk about that as it wraps around equity and opportunities, and expanding opportunities for all, delivering for students, and we jump to 5, a dynamic, collaborative system that serves the national interest, regionality is important, and ensuring that our recommendation spoke to that. And the funding model, which I will come back to, and lastly how we ensure a lasting reform. I just want to pick up on a summary at a very high level of the vision for a better and fairer higher education system that the Accord attempts to deliver, having touched on this I just want to reiterate the importance of growing our skilled workforce and doing that through equity and the importance of increasing participation from equity groups.

You have seen the data and you have seen the arguments. I am sure you will have a view about how compelling they are and in our view it was staggeringly obvious that we could not achieve the ambitious targets set in the report coming from the best modelling we could bring together, we cannot achieve that unless we improve participation from students in higher equity groups and particularly in tertiary education more broadly. Increasing participation, and students being the heart of the system, the regionality appointment is made, and also strengthening planning, accountability and performance. Just some elements of what a better and fairer system should encompass.

This is a summary of some of the key recommendations. And I pulled some together to give you context, a new funding model to deliver growth and quality. I will come back to that, and I'm sure you will talk about elements of it in the discussions that will follow. But we had a mandate to look at the impact the reform had on the sector, and we had a responsibility to go back to the government and in our view there are immediate changes needed to address some of the most difficult aspects of GERD. And I believe we need a completely new funding model to deliver the sort of growth we need, the quality we need, and also the two words that pop-up are planned and managed system, and we might want to talk about what that means in the context of the words such as a demand driven and that appear in the report itself. The national job is part Port is a particular important part of the initiative.-- Passport. We know how important a national skills passport with, the butt to put it in-- how important it would be, but to put it in connection with a jobs broker, for students coming from an economically disadvantaged background into university. For placements and employment in the labour market after graduation.

I want to link those up. There is a very powerful Treasury education attainment target, we are asked to consider targets. We have made it clear on the basis of the evidence what they should be.

Leanne will talk more about the First Nations recommendations within the report, but I wanted to talk about some of them. As happened with the Bradley review, the work reviewing Indigenous

higher education in this country, we need to do it again and very, principally. This report could not do justice to it in a more comprehensive way. In that report, I hope the government picks that up.

Help reform. I will come back to this again, because I think one of the important suites of recommendations in the accord report relate to help reform, touch on income support, talk about needs based funding, and ensure that we actually have growth through equity. You can't address the challenges of increasing participation from equity groups if you only tackle one dimension of the challenge.

And Shamit is online, I know he will talk about this a bit later. We had some great support from the centre at Curtin. Very very important to look at the report holistically around what we are suggesting to government that we do to support equity students. You can't just take a needs-based funding perspective on it. To do so actually avoids some of the very significant challenges of placement poverty, income support, HELP reform, and the way we need to scaffold the learning of equity students.

HELP reform is important. The stewardship role, that word is important around the Tertiary education commission concept. We debated this long and hard. We had many submissions after the interim report, it was a contentious suggestion. I think it is still a contentious recommendation now. But I think it has currency. I think it's a vitally important part of buffering the sector into the future.

I think it's a vitally important part of ensuring there is stewardship of these are commendations to the extent that the government intends to support them. And I think we need to collectively put pressure on government to support them.

To that extent we need a steward, to work collaboratively with the sector, and across sectors, because this is not simply about higher education. Again you cannot talk about equity in isolation of Treasury education more broadly. You know the data, even better than I do, from the accord process about the role of TAFE and VET sector plays in supporting and addressing equity student participation in our tertiary education sector.

Vitally important, I think. It would be interesting to see how people respond. And this theme that emerged in the interim report, and comes back I hope powerfully, growth through equity as an important part of how we believe as a nation that we need to achieve those very ambitious targets, to have the economy and the workforce, and the social mobility and inclusion that we need, we need to do it with a lens on equity.

But importantly looking at growth and skills for the future. We flipped to the next slide, and Sonal will wave at me, I know, when I have reached the point of no return.

I would spend a lot of time on our current and future skill needs, other than to say that I think they have a very important equity dimension to them. Not just the targets and attainment and growing the system, the single biggest investment that the government will make if it accepts these recommendations is the new funding model, and the growth funding over time, with a needs-based funding component to it. That is by far the biggest investment.

We have slightly slower growth in the system now, and that actually gives the sector an opportunity, I think, to scaffold itself. I do have an opportunity to some of the growth that had been forecast in the system in the forward estimates to come back, I think, as needs-based funding over this period where growth is perhaps not as strong as we had anticipated.

We do have low student demand, we have workforce casualisation, and we have financial strain on universities, we are acutely aware of that, which is why the Tertiary education commission is a vital part of the mix. And we do stress the integration of the tertiary education system, between the sectors.

And I hope you have picked up the many recommendations that relate to that. You can see the target on the screen, a very challenging one over the next 25 years. Not just for higher education, very much for tertiary education more broadly.

If we flip to the next slide. New qualifications, better pathways. I won't linger long on this, but it is really the integration. The first step, I think, in the way we might tackle integration into a tree education.-- Tertiary education.

The importance of a more seamless interaction between our systems, to see growth in higher ed and vocational education and training. To allow students to seamlessly navigate through this system. And of course an emphasis on modular, stackable, transferable qualifications.

The ideas of micro credentials, micro HELP, micro CTS. We have tried to set a frame around what this new credential could look like, with much more structure to it than exists at the moment. There are good examples around Australia.

In New South Wales we have what we call our Institute of applied technology, digital with UTS and Macquarie. And in construction with Western Sydney. There are great examples of bringing industry together with universities and TAFE to develop micro skills, micro could and shall-- credential.

The funding model is just not mature enough yet, and we hopefully have made a contribution towards that. Cooperative partnerships, placements for some of the big TAFES. Self accreditation for TAFE as well. If you don't think that's connected to equity you need to think again because equity students are a much higher proportion of their systems in higher education. That is an important part of the future.

Expanding opportunities for all, and for equity. Again, I have touched on a lot of this. The targets are at the bottom. In terms of underrepresented groups in higher education, First Nations students, low SES at the quartile level. One of the things we have to fix this quintile quartile. One of the things I will leave you to think about, I hope it's a crop rotation-- provocation. You should look at the data of the 2nd lowest quintile in the sector in terms of student attainment, progression and completion.

I think we have a challenge here not just with the low SES students, but with the next quintile up. I think it is worth some serious consideration. Just to leave you with that thought.

And improving participation from regional and remote, students across the sector. That is key with need-based funding. Go to the next slide.

I would like to say more about HELP. Again, you cannot address the challenge of increasing access and participation and completion for students from disadvantaged backgrounds unless you address the way the HELP system has developed over time, and the need to improve that system.

And we make a range of recommendations about that, around the repayment scheduling, where you reach more of a marginal arrangement around the repayment schedules. And of course the way indexation has hit HELP debt over particularly last year or so.

An important set of recommendations. And I think government have an appetite to consider them. I hope they recommend them. We made comments about student poverty. Again, income support is an important part of that, but so are mandatory placements and placement poverty.

Some of the income supported already happened because of cost of living response from the Commonwealth, but there is more to be done, we make specific recommendations that. And in the interim report recommendations regarding a national student (inaudible) and around students on campus with sexual assault and harassment, those matters have been picked up and acted on by government.

And we acknowledge that as part of our interim report. But again, student experience, the quality of teaching and learning, the quality of our teaching, the experience our academic staff have going into teaching in higher education. All that is captured in the report, amongst the 408 pages.

We move onto the next slide, Sonal. I'm not going to linger on this, its research related. It is a really important part of the final report. There were concerns in the interim report that research was underdone. I think we have address that. We needed more time to look at the data that was coming in, to get a response from the sector.

I think that the research section now does give a very clear direction for government around what we believe. I think we didn't go to formally recommending the 3% of GDP, but I think it is embedded

in the narrative in the sections dealing with producing and using new knowledge, but I'm not going to dwell on it here. I believe that for you in case there are any questions.-- Will leave that.

I will go to the next slide as we sort of wrapup. Improving tertiary education in regions. Again, I made this comment earlier. We had a strong belief in the importance of regional tertiary education. Fiona Nash was on the review panel, she is the original education Commissioner at a rich set of experiences that regional areas of Australia are going through the me and-- moment and historically, and how we can do more to address the sustainability of our regional universities.

The importance of our study hub concept being expanded. The government has pick that up, I think it's very encouraging to expand that to tertiary study hubs in metropolitan areas.

And there is a lot of work for Fiona to do as regional education Commissioner, to follow up if that recommendation is picked up by government, in relation to regional tertiary education and how we might work together as a sector, supporting regional universities.

But there is a strong commitment to regions, to the importance of regional institutions, the role that they play particularly in representing underrepresented groups, and the challenges they are experiencing by virtue of the funding model in place now, and the need to shift that funding model.

We go to the next slide. I dynamic, collaborative and innovative tertiary education system. Again to reinforce national tertiary education objectives. I haven't seen a lot of discussion around it, but it is in fact a vitally important guiding light, if accepted by government.

You have heard me talk about the stewardship aspect and the tertiary education commission. First Nations leadership, and the move towards self-determination. I'm really excited about what we're going to do at Western Sydney University to put substance to that commitment in our case, with Michele Trugett as our DVC Indigenous leadership to begin a discussion for a Voice to our Board of Trustees, and importantly a part-- pathway with our new Indigenous Centre of excellence around self-determination in higher education.

More of us will naturally respond to that planned and managed growth through a better funding model. That is a very important sentence to reflect on. It is not the demand driven system precisely as you might imagine it. There is a planned and managed element to it.

The next slide, which I am sure you will also soak up immediately because you have read the report, it is beautifully structured. But this tells you what the new funding system should look like, as far as we are concerned, across the dimensions of.

Funding higher education in this country is extraordinary challenging, because over time we have compartmentalised funding sources and made changes to funding sources, we have made changes to income contingent loans. It is complex. I must acknowledge the great work that we had done

around early versions of this from the James Martin Institute in New South Wales, with the team. But also from a range of others.

The group at RMIT that helped on aspects of this around the integration of the tertiary education system. Very happy if these are made available, but this gives you some insight into aspects of student contribution and government contrition. The fundamentals of income contingent loans and HECS HELP is still there, we believe in the back-- basis for finding the system. We need immediate adjustments in some areas to address what happened in JRG.

A move to needs-based funding. That will mean bringing pools of funding together and redistributing them, and I'm going to get the wind up any 2nd now from Sonal. Moderated growth targets. We accept that they can't be uniform across the sector, and we need to acknowledge why some universities are in their journey to increasing participation by equity students.

I think to set targets that are much more appropriate and moderated, I know this is something that was just talked about in some great presentations, and having a system steward. The last slide is simply to put this in the context, we cannot consider the review in the isolation of whatever else is happening.

The Accord sits beside 3 very important policy documents for the Commonwealth. The National skills agreement, something we haven't had in Australia for a decade. We now have that, which is the cooperation amongst the states, territories and Commonwealth around the funding of vocational education and training and TAFE. Are really important agreement, at the structure and the architecture of it will help to guide much of what I think we should talk about in a tertiary education context.

Of course you've got the school's report that Lisa O'Brien did, and what is emerging from the Brennan review for the productivity commission around early childhood education and care.

This will be the basis for a major, I'm sure, budget position from the Commonwealth this year. But please don't think of this in isolation of those very important other dimensions to supporting representation, participation, attainment, completion, for underrepresented groups in our community, and the uplift to Australia that that will generate. Particularly those ambitious skills targets.

That is the Accord in a nutshell. Thank you.

SONAL SINGH: Thanks, Barney. There is definitely a lot to cover, but I am mindful of the time because you have another appointment. Similarly, the question that I will ask you is one of the vice chancellors of the universities, and also as the incoming Jobs and Skills Commissioner, looking at the recommendations, which one do you think we should prioritise? Because the government has a lot on their plate.



PROFESSOR BARNEY GLOVEY AO: It is not surprising for this audience, but I was in any case we need a new funding model. I think it has to be a priority for government. It is pretty clear the rhetoric from the Minister right through the Accord process, but very powerfully at the UA conference dinner recently, and I think it was an important speech by the Minister and an important speech to play back to after the budget, but he made a strong statement around what he believed the Accord was promoting as the architecture or future of the sector, and a key component of the architecture is growth through equity and to achieve that we need to address the challenges around underrepresented students.

My recommendation to government is to implement all 47. However, there is 43, but let's not get into that. Let's get into a simple and fairer system, and bring in funding, not despite recycling funding in the system. It has to come from new money as well. There has to be injection of significant resources in the sector and not just for growth but to scaffold and support students. That is number one. That would be my priority. If I was pushed on a second one, it's health reform. I think it is when you drill down on what was developed by Bruce Chapman. And I know it was crucial throughout the process that it needs reform. And a powerful and immediate priorities it does bring cost of living for low income earners, especially if we could get recommendations around adjusting the repayment rates, because that will support low income earners and there are some poverty traps in the tech system that needs to be addressed.

Coupled with the importance of getting indexation right, but in some ways I think people would like us to go further. That would be beneficial. That would be the two that I would hold up at the moment as priorities, and not just because I am captured in this audience.

SONAL SINGH: Thank you for that, Barney.