Inquiry into Australia's Health Workforce
Productivity Commission

Thank you for sending me the Australian Government/Productivity Commission position paper on Australia's Health Workforce. I would like to address:

- draft proposal (4.1) which suggests the government should establish an advisory health workforce improvement agency

- draft proposal (5.1) which suggests the government should consider transferring primary responsibility for allocating the quantum of funding available for university-based education and training of health workers from the Department of Education, Science and Training to the Department of Health and Ageing

- draft proposal (5.2) which suggests the Aust. Health Ministers Conference should establish an advisory health workforce, education and training council.

If I had confidence that the above recommendations could reduce the socially dysfunctional red tape emanating from the problems and related multiple organizations which your report addresses, I would embrace them very gladly.

However, I remain suspicious that the existing circles of bureaucratic, academic and related professional interests would find a way to circumvent your good intentions through the utilization of even more types and levels of time-wasting, cross-organizational, red tape. (This may easily occur, in my experience, in the name of multidisciplinary or quality control requirements.)

I am a strong believer in quality service, the proper management of public funds and related accountabilities. In my opinion, the best way to achieve this is usually through openness. Unfortunately, however, the most popular game in town often now seems to be working out how much one can hide by making lots of administrative orders and then following them to the letter (in perfect ignorance of all other related, confidential matters, of course).

This may be assisted, in my experience, by the way in which all meaning may now more easily be reduced to ticks in boxes, as a means of circumventing more genuine and useful requirements for personal analysis, documentation and accountability. (Such systems and related actions may also, in my experience, be justified to those who complain by reference to requirements for consistent treatment from case to case, to computing necessities or to the natural fear of lawyers.)

As a result of this, I think we are often facing an increasingly unhealthy state of administrative affairs, especially in faculties teaching health students. In my view, all staff and students need to understand that administration is something one should do thoughtfully, with variations from policy, guidelines or apparently expert practice being made and documented whenever necessary, to meet the apparent needs of each specific situation, considered from a holistic perspective. Each individual treatment may then become part of an overall research base of data on any matter (e.g. apparent student plagiarism) which may also be used to advise on policy change in future.

Popper said that all administration should be regarded as experimentation. Such a view is hardly known and not popular in the health faculties of universities in my experience and this does not help the students or the community, in my opinion. There seems in my faculty, for example, to

be a rigid view that narrow administrative procedures should be followed to the letter and that research is an entirely different matter, driven by the conventions of a particular academic discipline, such as clinical psychology.   I think this perception is often wrong and unhelpful.

To address the above issues, I therefore ask you to consider the attached and related policy proposal for an open, Australian education model to implement health and sustainable development goals. It is my view that the production of such an open education model would also be helpful for assisting the general policy direction you propose in recommendations (4.1) (5.1) and (5.2). I attach a recent and related commentary on the Proposed Australian Research Framework (RQF: The preferred model, Sept. 2005) endorsed for release and public consultation by the Expert Advisory Group for the RQF. I also attach related and consolidated recommendations which I have recently made to reviews being conducted at Sydney University.

My general aims are openness, flexible skills development, accountability and to develop related and integrated perspectives on community service provision and research.   For example, I have just read the City of Sydney Draft Adult Entertainment and Sex Service Premises Development Control Plan, which seems excellent to me. Might the services of some prostitutes, rather than psychiatrists or psychologists, be a cheaper and more effective way of meeting the needs experienced by some men with physical and/or mental disabilities? I have absolutely no idea, but I would love to see some data on issues such as this or other broad, community based treatments (e.g. the Creative Youth Initiatives Program run by Mission Australia). I fear that the more traditional professional and related diagnostic approaches to health treatment may be institutionalizing legalised drug consumption at the public expense, to the detriment of all. Whilst I am in sympathy with proposal (5.1) I fear it may increase the danger of medicalizing life expensively and perhaps inappropriately and hazardously, if it is not implemented so as to guard against this danger. Please consider my proposal for open education in this light.

Thank you for the opportunity to make this submission. I can be contacted by email on C.Odonnell@fhs.usyd.edu.au or by phone on 02-96608716.

Yours truly

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COMMENTARY ON THE PROPOSED AUSTRALIAN RESEARCH QUALITY FRAMEWORK (RQF: THE PREFERRED MODEL, SEPTEMBER 2005) ENDORSED FOR RELEASE AND PUBLIC CONSULTATION BY THE EXPERT ADVISORY GROUP FOR THE RQF.

Thank you for the RQF preferred model paper, which I read with great interest. The Australian Bureau of Statistics and related definitions of research seem extremely sensible to me because they appear based on equally sensible international criteria.

However, as I understand it, the preferred administrative model for a national research quality framework also involves the following proposals, which I now seek to provide feedback upon:

1. Broadbanding of the current academic and scientific discipline driven categories of research and research selection, with research panel membership consisting of 12-15 relevant selectors. At least 50% of these should be international experts, primarily resident overseas as well as at least two 'users of the research under assessment ('qualified end-users'?)

2. The addition of 'qualified end-users' (industry and community representatives?) to research selection and outcome assessment panels currently driven by those possessing qualifications in the relevant, broadbanded, academic and scientific disciplines.

3. The introduction of 'Third Stream Funding' for activities that involve successful application of the original research of others (eg knowledge diffusion or transfer) and broader activities that stimulate and facilitate knowledge transfer by universities to business and society'.

4. The development and application of research output assessment criteria.

5. Comparisons of research excellence between universities and publicly funded research agencies, with funding streams kept separate.

The above model appears well designed for some, but very partial. I personally look forward eagerly to the proposed Third Stream Funding. However, I think the proposed development and application of research output assessment criteria are extremely problematic and that this is also explained by the fact that the proposed model ignores the national, regional community and industry focus as a potential driver of research. This is particularly unfortunate if it is also recognized that the Minister for Foreign Affairs is currently seeking to implement the United National Millennium Development Goals more effectively, especially in regard to those environments designated as comparatively 'fragile states'. Surely publicly funded research should also serve these internationally agreed development goals, which are:

1. Eradicate extreme poverty and hunger
2. Achieve universal primary education
3. Promote gender equality and empower women
4. Reduce child mortality
5. Improve maternal health
6. Combat HIV/AIDS, malaria and other diseases
7. Ensure environmental sustainability
8. Develop a global partnership for development

In my opinion, the relevant regional and industry context should drive all cross-disciplinary and/or more narrowly discipline based research as necessary. Ideally, research should also relate to the kind of education for health and sustainable development which appears most necessary to achieve international, national and regional goals. (Please find supporting papers related to this approach attached.) Why else were international and national health and sustainable development goals adopted by democratic governments if not to be implemented by those who receive public funding?

The problems of the proposed RQF design are evident in the recognition on page 19 that RQF guidelines will have to be developed which address many conceptual issues in the proposed design, including how selection panels will define and address cross disciplinary research; eligibility to do research and outputs to be submitted for research assessment. The RQF paper has merely deferred its major conceptual problems to guidelines. In addition, let me ask how many panels there will be; how those on panels will be selected; whether those who do the research selection will also do the research outcome assessment and whether this is the same as assessing the research quality and impact? (These are all tough questions.)

I think the research quality and impact matrix which is proposed in regard to research outcome assessment in the RQF design is pointless in that the level of success and impact of research outcomes may be entirely in the eye of the beholder. The matrix bears a superficial resemblance to the Severity and Frequency matrix which is often drawn up by those who seek to prioritise risks prior to their control. However, unlike the latter matrix, I think the Research Quality and Impact Matrix will operate more as an academic peer popularity contest than anything more scientific and rooted in real world evidence related to resolving questions, problems or related risks. Even more importantly, the proposed matrix will divert researchers from the main scientific game of testing hypotheses in the real world, in order to assess the outcomes of their experiments. The matrix seems likely instead to drive researchers into buttering up those academic, scientific and bureaucratic peers they should, perhaps, be criticizing most if they were genuinely concerned about pursuing truth, rather than personal success and the related academic or scientific laurels.

As a salutary exercise for those who might wish Australia to enter into the race apparently proposed by the New Zealanders or in the suggested RQF rating scales, I propose the academic undertaking I have just completed for myself. This involves going to the poorly named 'Open Citation' indexes and related journal citation reports on the

ISI Web of Knowledge to find out which journals in the world are supposedly most quoted, in order to access the apparently most relevant and high status journals internationally, before sending one's research articles to them. If you do this, you will find that you are lucky if you can access any information for contributors on many of these journal websites and recent hard copies of these journals are no longer in the Sydney University Library as they are available online. Do these journals then operate as closed shops for mates? Up until now I have been sending articles to journals using an apparently less scientific approach. Many never replied. Is the moral to be drawn from this that one must start off researching in the right clubs to get ahead?

In the current development context it is also useful to recall that when the Industry Commission held an inquiry into occupational health and safety in 1995, the employer, worker and government representatives who appeared before the Commission all believed that the traditional peer driven research process is not particularly useful, but is designed so that people with an academic specialty may keep generating programs and publication in their areas of interest, rather than the total research pool being used primarily to meet public need (Industry Commission, 1995, p.227). The Department of Occupational Medicine at Sydney University, which had been funded through Worksafe, the National Occupational Health and Safety Commission, was closed soon afterwards. This danger should be avoided in the future, not encouraged by the RQF Rating Scales.

As a former public servant, I am even inclined to think that the proposed RQF Rating Scales contain bureaucratic jokes. For example, Table 3 provides a Possible Research Impact Rating Scale in which the highest rating is proposed for any research which apparently leads to changes in legislation or amendments to regulatory arrangements. During the ten years I spent in the NSW public service it was something of an in-house joke that every technocrat in NSW who ever walked or chewed gum appeared to think that he was the original author of some vital piece of legislative change. We even thought that of ourselves. It is usually impossible to verify such perceptions, even though they are often held extremely strongly. (I have long experience pondering such issues.)

Surely the primary test of research is whether it achieves its own and related community objectives or something more unexpected but equally important? (This is also supposed to be the test of legislation that is ideally reviewed every ten years.) However, under the current proposal researchers seem likely to have to spend much of their time currying favour with the relevant international academic, scientific and bureaucratic tribes, in order to fill in all the dubious paperwork which will increasingly be expected of them if they are ever to get ahead in their careers.

I think that choosing the most excellent research in the world, especially by the proposed method, is probably as vain as Jack Black's efforts to identify and play the best song in the world, for all the same reasons - but involving much less fun and more paper work. Rather than continuing with the proposed 'excellent' identification goals related to research assessment, I suggest that more effort should be put into defining what national and regional community and industry goals seem most achievable through research. If research achieved them, then it would seem money well spent, whether or not it was

heard of, let alone rated internationally from the perspective of any related sets of vested academic, bureaucratic or professional interests.

The best way to judge research outcomes may be through providing the potential for the broadest possible comparison and critique of diverse and transparent research approaches and outcomes. Then all people will be able to judge research success more effectively, using their own terms of reference, which presumably will relate primarily to solving their own personal and environmental problems. Such judgement may be best achieved primarily through research and education transparency and improvements in all related communication.

In my view, the sort of 'excellent' contests the paper suggests that New Zealanders are entering into always waste a lot of time and money without achieving anything more real than prizes for popularity. They also damp down or eradicate many more productive forms of dissent and controversy. Better people therefore often hate them and I personally think they should be stopped. I find the proposed RQF Research Rating Scales as being a bit like something from the monkey kingdom, where the leadership palm apparently always goes to those with the most good friends – and in the human world aren't they nearly always from the USA or Britain? I think people should just get on with their research and reporting on its outcomes broadly and transparently. If the funding body and the relevant industry or community liked the outcomes then perhaps more money will be provided, depending upon how important the continuing problem appears to be from national and regional community and industry perspectives.

Thank you for the opportunity to make this input. I can be contacted on 9660 8716 or at C.Odonnell@fhs.usyd.edu.au

Yours truly

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AN OPEN, AUSTRALIAN EDUCATION MODEL TO IMPLEMENT HEALTH AND SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS

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Abstract: This article presents an Australian education strategy designed to serve sustainable development and related international aims for improving health and the environment. The education strategy is based on analysis of the international and local regulatory context and related theoretical views influencing government direction. Consistent academic, government and industry approaches to governance, competition, education, communication and research are addressed first. A supporting model for an open education content production and communication partnership to promote health and sustainable development is then presented. It proposes a management contract with the aim of assisting the attainment of health and sustainable development goals of governments and communities which may be adapted to achieve commercial aims in communication and other industries. Further investigation is required, including consultation and pilot development to test this education management hypothesis in open, broad and flexible communication contexts.

The international context of health and education provision

Health and education are primary drivers of productivity and the poor have the worst of both ((United Nations (UN) 2003; Murray and Lopez 1996; United Nations Development Program (UNDP 2005). Measured by longevity, health is improving internationally, but not for all. Many nations face increasing problems in providing for the elderly, the disabled, the unemployed and poor. The United Nations (2003) noted that globally, primary education provides the greatest return on investment for individuals and communities and fertility control is necessary for avoiding poverty. At post-war Cambridge, Snow (1959) claimed Western intellectual life was split into two polar camps – with scientists and literary intellectuals ignoring each other's approaches, sometimes with mutual dislike and incomprehension. He argued academic specialization was unhealthy and that the main problem for science should be closing the gap between rich and poor. A related, holistic World Health Organisation (WHO) strategy to improve health has since arisen. It is not well implemented, partly because the academic specialization problem Snow identified continues. This article presents an Australian tertiary education strategy to reduce all these problems by promoting open, continuing education and communication to improve governance for health and sustainable development.

The (WHO) has promoted broadly coordinated approaches to managing social administration since 1986 when the Ottawa Charter stated that necessary health supports include peace, shelter, food, income, a stable economic system, sustainable resources, social justice and equity. The Charter called for development of public policy, reorientation of health services, and community action to support health goals. The WHO program aims to increase the span of healthy life so that the disparities between social groups are reduced. The UN Declaration on Environment and Development (1992) stated health concerns should lead development. A holistic approach to health should therefore teach basic principles of how to identify and prioritise related problems, in order to devise injury prevention and rehabilitation solutions. However, the president of the World Bank lamented that traditional economic policies to address growth have seldom been accompanied by an equal focus on governance for health, education and environment improvement. Those with a narrower professional or short-term commercial focus drive development outcomes (Stiglitz and Muet, 1999). An education strategy to improve this situation is described later.

Galbraith (1973) viewed nations and the international economy as having a central tendency towards planning and monopoly, with a highly competitive but impoverished economic periphery where rural dwellers, migrants or those with comparatively little of the requisite education seek work. He advised governments to bring dual economies into greater equilibrium by increasing competition in monopolistic sectors, and strengthening communities in peripheries. After a period where the unconditional liberalization of markets was championed, the World Bank and other economists appear again to be calling for more effective and stable governance of economic institutions, and for more attention to health and education expenditure and management (Stiglitz and Muet, 1999)(Stiglitz, 2002). Sen (1999) explained the early Chinese Communist preoccupation with basic health and education for the masses as necessary precursors for successful entry into global manufacturing. He argued the Indian government has supported growth in bureaucratic and professional classes to the detriment of surrounding communities. Governments, universities and other institutions should avoid this problem. Education which aims to do so is discussed later.

Sen (1999) supported the Japanese Prime Minister's address to the Asian Crisis and Human Security Conference. This contrasted the aim of 'human security' and the values of creativity and dignity with traditional notions of national security and defence. 'Human security' is seen as the way of addressing all menaces that threaten the survival, daily life, and dignity of human beings,

and strengthening efforts to confront threats. Sen argued that support for the poor, freedom of speech and transparent management are all essential for effective operation of the market and for equality. This is consistent with the holistic, risk management based approaches to health and education which are discussed later in an Australian context. The Minister for Foreign Affairs has called for a global partnership for development as Australia's contribution to achieving the Millennium Development goals which aim at eradicating poverty, hunger, disease and gender inequality, and achieving universal education, health and environmental sustainability (Australian Government/AusAID, 2005, p.1). It is later explained how Australian health, education, and communication development may be conceptualised and planned to encourage sustainable development locally and globally. The hypothesis requires research conducted through education.

Governance for sustainable development in Australia and globally

Weber thought the development of government bureaucracy should be understood as the progressive extension of more rationally planned approaches to community governance, which must also reform earlier law, under increasing pressures of democratic demand (Gerth and Wright Mills, 1977). From this perspective, increasing taxation, mandated insurance covers or other funds must support broadening national goals for improving health and environment standards. Managing funds effectively, in the public interest, must become a central preoccupation of the democratic process. In pre-war Britain, Keynes called for the extension of 'publicness', with the government as war fund leader rather than sole owner (Skidelsky 2000, p. 274). A related management perspective based on social insurance, to provide protection against injury, financial stability and full employment through planning to avoid market fluctuations was central to the post-war British welfare vision (Beveridge 1942). Australian governments took similar directions in health care, workers' compensation and workplace based provision for old age (superannuation). Related national, regional and industry platforms exist from which to consider community education, communication and research needs. The open education proposal described later is designed to improve local or regional management to achieve health and sustainable development.

Drucker (1999) noted the 20th century growth sectors were government, education, health and leisure and that none operate according to traditional supply and demand. He claimed it is no longer enough for organizations to meet the interests of shareholders for success and that concerns of workers, consumers and communities about health, environment protection and individual development must be met. Following Bell (1973) and Drucker (1993), Florida (2003) argued knowledge is now the major means of production rather than capital, natural resources or labour. Knowledge production is different to other forms because its value to the community multiplies and increases through its creation, spread and use, rather than the product being used up or the production destroying the 'global commons' for private gain, as is the case in agriculture, mining or manufacturing. Florida argued that traditional societies overprotect intellectual property and reduce opportunities for creativity, which he conceptualised as the useful combination of new forms out of existing knowledge. Exercising creativity often involves crossing the disciplinary boundaries which Snow wrote about and which the WHO strategy faces. The open education and communication strategy discussed later is designed to meet these challenges.

Florida argued that because a good idea produces more value for the community the more it is used and built upon it also produces increasing returns on production rather than the diminishing returns which traditional economists think is normal. The broader the reach of education, the broader is also the dissemination of knowledge and all related productive and creative strategies. The quality of education is partly in the eye of the beholder who consumes it to meet his or her needs. Education openness may therefore logically be seen as a necessary but insufficient test of education quality. The more one knows about education beforehand, the more one may judge if it is worth consuming.

Aspiring postgraduate students may be particularly grateful for information on key principles of undergraduate teaching and learning, which they may be expected to build upon through their research. Certification of student competency is a separate matter, which may be managed by institutions according to various specifications.

In 1994 the Asia Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) Conference saw growing consensus about the roles of governments and markets. Leaders agreed to create an Asia-Pacific free trade zone by 2020, and supported the protection of health and the natural environment. Members have diverse political regimes including those of Australia, China, Japan, Indonesia and the US. Governments based on the British model have traditionally separated three principle governance powers. Elected politicians, government administrators, and the judiciary are central but independent pillars of governance in this model. In more recent models, the emphasis is primarily on clear separation of policy and administration, with the former in the driver's seat (Rich, 1989; Hilmer, 1993; Osborne and Gaebler, 1993). Australian governments began to implement this direction in 1989 with legislative review to update laws and make requirements plain. The Council of Australian Governments (COAG) agreed to mutual recognition of state laws, and support for national standards for health, the environment, related occupations and training, disability services, social security benefits, and labour market programs (Premiers and Chief Ministers, 1991). Recommendations of the Hilmer Report (1993) were implemented in the Commonwealth Competition Policy Reform Act (1995). Legislative review continued with the aim of promoting equal competition between public and private sector service providers on a level playing field of national standards, unless another course of action appears to be in the public interest (Fels, 1996).

Key professional and industry management models stress the importance of consultatively developed policy and aims, supported by transparent service delivery and outcomes. Health planning, health promotion, workplace risk management, action research and program budgeting reflect such requirements (Eagar, Garrett and Lin, 2001; Wass, 1994; Standards Australia, 1999; Kemmis and McTaggert 1990; Wilenski, 1986). They also apply to resolution of disputes (Braithwaite, 2000; Strang and Braithwaite, 2001; Standards Australia, 200X). Evidence based health care management proceeds, ideally, in spiral steps composed of consultative planning, action and evaluation (Johnson, 1997). Decision makers should deviate from expert recommended practice if the evidence is that other action appears safer in a particular context. A broad, iterative administration and recording process may produce evidence which modifies an earlier approved process or direction. The risk management requirements of Australian state occupational health and safety (OHS) acts provide a consistent approach to identification and control of risk, using approved codes of practice. From an action research perspective, all social administration may be envisaged as experimentation combining discovery and implementation in a continuing process which attempts to improve outcomes. However, the management of Australian public and private health funds requires reform to deliver this ideal. (Review of Professional Indemnity Arrangements for Health Care Professionals, 1995; Australian Health Ministers Advisory Council, 1996; National Expert Advisory Group on Safety and Quality in Australian Health Care, 1999; Australian Government/Productivity Commission (AG/PC 2005). This could be assisted by open education to meet community need.

Australian health, education and welfare systems are mainly taxation based. However, major expansion of funds under public and industry ownership has occurred in health, workers compensation and retirement savings. Duckett (1997) showed the national, Australian Medicare design outperformed the US market based health insurance system in terms of population access, equity and cost. Australian governments have often inquired into the management of health and injury insurance funds (National Committee of Inquiry 1974; NSW Government 1986; NSW WorkCover Review Committee 1989; House of Representatives Standing Committee on Transport, Communications and Infrastructure 1992; Review of Professional Indemnity Arrangements for

Health Care Professionals 1995; Standing Committee on Law and Justice 1997; Industry Commission 1997; Senate Economic References Committee 2002; The HIH Royal Commission 2003). This has lead many to believe that insurance should be regulated and underwritten by government and industry stakeholders but openly and competitively managed to achieve scheme injury prevention and rehabilitation aims through service delivery and fund management. Critics of competitive contracting by government (Pusey, 1991; Hancock, 1999; Smyth and Cass, 1998) failed to discuss any relationship this may bear to broader management processes which have extended government and industry ownership of funds and all related management accountability.

Opportunities should now exist to design tertiary education and communication policy to meet regional health needs and skill shortages. The report of the competition policy reform review (2004, p. xxi) noted provision of human services such as health, education, aged care, and natural resource management (other than water), have been largely outside the purview of national competition policy. It recommended COAG initiate independent public review of Australia's health care system as the first step in the development of integrated reform to address structural problems that prevent the system from performing to its potential. A related health workforce planning inquiry has just reported (AG/PC 2005). It recommends establishment of a National Health Workforce Planning Council to replace some existing bodies and the transfer of responsibility for allocating funding for university education and training from the Department of Education, Science and Training to the Department of Health and Ageing. Will these proposals have the support necessary to deal with outdated bureaucratic and professional regulatory approaches?

Unlike the situation for medical practitioners, rural centres have comparatively high levels of nurses and up to 30% of doctors' work could be undertaken by nurses (Duckett 2004, p.83). However, there is already a shortage of nurses of around 2.2 percent by 2006, requiring an additional 4000 graduates (AG/PC 2005, p.xxiii). The open education model proposed later could be designed to meet such skill shortages. Basic management education for injury prevention, rehabilitation and sustainable development could also be made available. The National Expert Advisory Group on Safety and Quality in Australian Health Care (1999) recommended that health ministers lead the way in promoting a safety and quality enhancement ethos throughout the system. The group suggested education to work in a team environment and advised that curricula for quality management should be included in all undergraduate, postgraduate and continuing education and training.

One in five Australians of workforce age are now dependent to some extent on pension related support provided by taxpayers. (Minister Assisting the Prime Minister for the Status of Women 1999, p 1). This is usually paid on a means tested basis, to the unemployed, people with disabilities and their carers, lone parents and students. The elderly may also access a means tested pension. Florida argued that the answer to improving the lot of disadvantaged, underpaid, underemployed people everywhere lies in tapping the creativity which all possess and integrating them into the creative economy. Consistent with this approach, United Nations agencies (UN, 2001) define community-based rehabilitation (CBR) as a strategy within community development for the rehabilitation, equalization of opportunities and social integration of all people with disabilities which should be implemented through the combined efforts of disabled people, their families and communities, and appropriate health, education, vocational and social services. Community services may be delivered in regionally coordinated ways which also meet goals of poverty reduction. Broad, effective and cheap education is necessary but not sufficient to achieve this everywhere.

In 2000, the Treasurer initiated inquiry into telecommunications competition regulation. The Productivity Commission concluded there is an inherent difficulty in defining anti-competitive conduct in an objective sense and it is not possible to undertake a full benefit cost analysis of the merits of anti-competitive conduct regulation. It stated that lack of transparency in the Trade

Practices Act (Part XIB) also limits the ability of telecommunications providers and the community to analyse and comment. Lack of pricing and related transparency is often problematic for assessing the benefits or otherwise of competition (Standing Committee on Law and Justice, 1997; Senate Economic References Committee, 2002; The HIH Royal Commission, 2003; AG/PG, 2005). The Commission's view of its own inquiry into allegations of unfair use of market power is summed up in its quote from the Hilmer Report (1993, p. 69):

> The central conundrum in addressing the problem of misuse of market power is that the problem is not well defined or apparently amenable to clear definition…. Even if particular types of conduct can be named it does not seem possible to define them, or the circumstances in which they should be treated as objectionable, with any great precision…..Faced with this problem….the challenge is to provide a system which can distinguish between desirable and undesirable activity while providing an acceptable level of business certainty. (2001, p. 154)

The education proposal below is consistent with this view. It supports a cooperatively planned and open approach to education and competition, in order to achieve health and sustainable development as broadly as possible. Continuing to define the concept of unfair competition through litigation between rich and secretive market players, often funded from the public purse, does not seem in the public interest.

A related proposal for continuing education

Australia is a minnow in a global knowledge market. In a comparison of seventeen developed democracies, Tiffen and Gittens (2004) showed the US has the highest level of total investment in knowledge, accounting for 45% of total international spending on research and development. When Germany, France and the United Kingdom were added, 85% of total international research and development funding was covered. On the other hand, Australia appears comparatively well placed for competition in the future. It is a highly educated, English speaking nation, close to large Asian markets and it has the highest immigration rate of the developed nations. Its community health management, including HIV/AIDS, and crime related death rates are comparatively good, but the US as a comparatively poor record on community health and crime (Tiffen and Gittens, 2004). Australian policy needs to build upon its strengths. The market potential for Australian education to assist health and sustainable development seems likely to be large. Existing education product could be identified and delivered openly and cooperatively in a variety of management contexts and through a variety of communications and institutional support.

Australia is in the top five exporters of education services (Nguyen-Hong and Wells 2003, 2). However, the continuing education market potential is not currently met effectively (Gallagher 2000; Nelson 2002; Marginson 2004). This depresses all Australian trade and research. For example, Sydney University believed market opportunities for distance education are best met through on-line ventures, like Universitas 21. But, as the President of the Australian National Tertiary Education Union, (Allport, 2001) lamented, less than 5% of the world population is connected and the wealthiest communities have nearly all the Internet users. On-line learning production costs cannot compete with those of the traditional class room and the venture has not so far been successful (Marginson 2004). Alone, the product appears too narrowly available and expensive to be a good contribution. Does it assist an elite 'brain drain' towards increasingly lucrative opportunities abroad, at the expense of the large majority in any population, let alone the poorest? What is the quality of this product? If it is the recommended approach, a vast, potential student talent pool and related commercial opportunities to promote health and sustainable development appear ignored.

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The Sydney University Vice Chancellor's vision is to produce 'a noble purpose and a better bottom line'. Accordingly, I seek an employment contract to assist development of an open education content production and communication venture to implement health and sustainable development goals. The aim is regional health and environment improvement through an open, competitive, education production and communication partnership with a stakeholder model of funds management, rather than a stockholder driven approach. This may also be designed to meet specific skill shortages and assist research. Students can be provided with an understanding of basic governance principles related to injury prevention, rehabilitation and insurance. They will have opportunities to undertake practical exercises in the consultative identification and control of risks to health and sustainable development which may be applied in any community or workplace setting. They may also learn and apply more established disciplines and vocational skills. It is envisaged that commercial management approaches would apply to the venture, unless alternative action is in the public interest. However, the proposal primarily seeks transparency and to promote open education and communication, so as to improve education and related comparability, effectiveness, accessibility, flexibility, quality and cost, partly through economies of scale.

This continuing education model should also be understood as driven by free trade and communication development. Telecommunications is a fast growing international industry characterised by large investment in new infrastructure, rapid change in the range and complexity of products and services and technological convergence. For example, messaging, email and videoconferencing are all new services and mobile, satellite and cable are all new platforms. Separate sectors such as broadcasting and telephony are converging. In its submission to the Joint Standing Committee on Treaties inquiry into the Australia /United States Free Trade Agreement (AUSFTA), the Australia Council for the Arts warned:

> 'By 2010, virtually all entertainment and media is expected to be in digital formats, easily fed via satellites to cinemas and homes from sources outside Australia. As a result, many of the existing broadcasting rules governing local content will become irrelevant and new forces will come into play'. (Joint Standing Committee on Treaties, 2004, p.188).

The committee said it does not wish to see Australian content requirements lowered. However, it recognized the Australian market is too small to sustain a diverse range of program types and recoup production costs, which gives the American market a competitive price advantage that Australia 'will never overcome' (Joint Standing Committee on Treaties, 2004, p.168). Telecommunications services currently comprise around 3% of Australian gross domestic product. The major services are fixed voice (telephone) services, mobile services, Internet services, data services and content services (including TV and on-line information). Fixed voice services accounted for 45% of total sector revenue in 2000, down from 75% in 1994 (Productivity Commission, 2001). Global communication businesses are powerful drivers and it is not easy for Australia to avoid following in the US footprint, which poses dangers for cultural diversity, community health and employment. However, as GlobeCast international satellite representatives indicated, big businesses like theirs depend partly upon fostering as much diverse community communication as possible. This is reassuring if it suggests that big investors may support a wide variety of national and community ventures.

To meet a related range of concerns I have developed a new subject called, 'Health, Sex and Money (Foundations of Civilization)'. This aims to broaden student understanding of all subjectivity and development through demonstrating how individuals must be conceptualised as products of their environments, at least in part. Students learn to situate and study themselves and others in geographic, economic, political and cultural context. Ideally, they should also have opportunities to make short films, other media products or judgments, drawing upon diverse information. The approach aims to combat the continuing problems of intellectual specialization which also interfere

with effective and critical implementation of holistic, sociological approaches to mental or other health.   A related aim is to develop relationships between those seeking to meet health, communication or sustainable development goals and student producers of media product, to the advantage of all. On the assumption that the principle role of government is to promote competition to achieve social and environmental objectives, rather than to make money for its constituent organizations (Rich, 1989; Hilmer, 1993; Osborne and Gaebler, 1993) the proposed education model should be driven by an academic, government, industry and community partnership to promote health and sustainable development. This could also be designed to assist those with primarily commercial aims in all industries, including communication. A broadly consistent proposal was made in the report of a review of indigenous TV held by the Department of Communications, Information Technology and the Arts (DCITA, 2005).

Many countries appear likely to have a high demand for good quality vocational education which teaches English in the process.   The simple combination of TV or videos, PowerPoint overheads and supporting books of lectures could open up educational access to millions, whether or not they have personal computers or are yet ready to gain the relevant certificates of competency.   Many people currently teaching and learning in Australian tertiary institutions may also benefit from this approach. The Australian Universities Quality Agency (2004) made suggestions for improving Sydney University and reviews into teaching basic sciences and other matters are currently taking place. The Vice-Chancellor pointed out:

> "One of the dangers in a developed economy is that universities conceptualise themselves partly as businesses, which of course you must, but you must never lose sight of the core objectives of the university, and absolutely fundamental to that is academic freedom" (Australian Financial Review, 14.1.05, p. 29)

The recommended education approach aims to do this by harnessing the traditional academic, government, professional and commercial incentives more effectively in the service of health and sustainable development, rather than for narrower objectives.

Communication developments which may support open education

New broadband technology is designed to assist carriage of many different forms of communication more effectively. The national broadband strategy provided $142.8 million to assist Australian regional development.   It followed an independent regional telecommunications inquiry in 2002 which aimed to provide a comprehensive assessment of telecommunications services in regional Australia and make recommendations to ensure that regional, rural and remote areas share in the benefits of new technologies. The strategy is designed to allow broadband investment across all levels of government to be coordinated with regional priorities and the needs of key industry sectors such as health and education, while providing a national focus to all activities. Open education aimed at more effective health governance, or to meet skills shortages, promote rehabilitation or prevent unemployment may be considered in this context.

A major focus of government and media attention has been on Telstra, the largest operator in the Australian telecommunications industry. The Commonwealth owns 51.8 percent of Telstra, which it intends to privatise fully. The Productivity Commission estimated Telstra currently accounts for around two thirds of total services revenue. Its market dominance is because it is the original government owner and provider of all the lines and switches that are currently used for sending or receiving voice and data on fixed phone lines. If a rival to Telstra wishes to compete in non-local services, such as mobile, national and international long distance calls, it must have access to the 'local loop' of aging copper wires historically funded by government and inherited by Telstra.   The

carrier has been named as the biggest consumer of legal services in Australia (Productivity Commission, 2001, p. xxv). It has faced repeated charges from the National Competition Council that it prevents competition by its monopoly power. Rural dwellers, on the other hand, opposed the government's final sale of Telstra shares until satisfied that they would not be disadvantaged.

In addition to the major national broadcasters, many small regional broadcasters with special interests are currently provided with broadcasting licences. However, they are often economically marginal. In 2001, the Australian Broadcasting Authority conducted an investigation into regional community TV licences. It recommended such organizations might like to enter consortia which draw a clear distinction between their financial and community interests. This seems a good idea. Regional planning potentially involves development of many voluntary, public/private partnerships across many areas, including with a wide variety of non-profit, community aid or related advocacy groups. Effective education and broad communication both appear necessary for the attainment of healthy, creative and sustainable communities. All organizations and communities may benefit from clarifying how their community service and commercial goals may relate better in this context.

The education funding measures in Backing Australia's Future, the statement delivered by the Commonwealth Minister for Education, Science and Training in 2003, provided a regional loading and an enabling loading to support education of disadvantaged people. There was also increased government money for nurse and teacher education to meet skill shortages. The proposed open education development may assist this management direction further and also provide a means of reducing dysfunctional, professional or related bureaucratic rigidities which, by narrowing the market for education, may reward comparatively poor performance and increase social inequality.

Conclusion

International and Australian health and competition policy should be used to assist Australian communities and businesses to improve health and sustainable development for as many people as possible. An education model designed to deliver this is offered, which may be driven by an academic, government, industry and community partnership with the aim of promoting health. This could also assist organizations with primarily commercial aims in all industries, including communication. A stakeholder model of funds management is recommended which may also be designed to meet specific skill shortages and assist research. Students can be provided with an understanding of basic governance principles related to injury prevention, rehabilitation and insurance. They will have opportunities to undertake practical exercises in the consultative identification and control of risks to health and sustainable development which may be applied in any community or workplace setting. They may also learn and apply more established disciplines and vocational skills. The proposal primarily seeks transparency and to promote open education and communication, so as to improve education effectiveness, comparability, quality, accessibility and flexibility through economies of scale and thereby lower unit cost.

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