



Expert Council on University Governance
Department of Education
expertcouncilunigov@education.gov.au

Friday 4th April, 2025

Dear Expert Council on University Governance,

Thank you for inviting Equity Practitioners in Higher Education Australasia to make a submission to strengthen the governance of universities.

Equity Practitioners in Higher Education Australasia (EPHEA) has over 1,100 members across Australian and New Zealand Universities and is the peak body for supporting student and staff facing practitioners across the sector.

In designing future governance models for universities, EPHEA agrees with the ten priority areas outlined by the Education Ministers, however, has additions to strengthen the areas presented.

1. Embedding Equity in University Governance. EPHEA strongly advocates for:

- Equity representation to be embedded at the highest levels of decision-making. Governance structures must ensure that staff from diverse backgrounds have a voice on university councils, academic boards, and executive leadership teams. As well as establishing inclusive modes for participation.
- Establishing an Equity Committee as a standing subcommittee of University Councils to provide oversight and accountability for institutional equity goals.
- Universities having a dedicated Equity Strategy, that is the responsibility of the University Executive and endorsed by University Councils.
- Equity, diversity and inclusion being a key criterion in the recruitment and selection of University Council members. The knowledge, skills and experience, including their commitment to equity, diversity and inclusion should be communicated to the university community upon their appointment. Equity, diversity and inclusion criteria should also extend to the recruitment of University Executive staff.

2. Strengthening Student-Centred Governance. EPHEA strongly advocates for:

- Multiple and diverse student voices to form university governing bodies, including First Nations students, students from equity backgrounds, and students from differing modes and stages of study.
- Supporting the engagement of a diversity of student voices through a consistent standard of remuneration for these roles across all universities.
- Adopting co-design principles in decision-making processes to incorporate lived experiences into governance decisions affecting student policies and programs.
- A requirement of universities to provide training and ongoing support for students undertaking these roles to maximise the impact of student voices in these settings and ensure a positive experience for students engaged in these roles.



- 3. Transparent and Inclusive Decision-Making.** EPHEA strongly advocates for:
- Universities to publish annual equity impact reports detailing progress against national and institutional equity targets.
 - Governance processes including an equity impact assessment when making major institutional decisions, particularly those affecting admissions, funding, and student support structures.
 - Regular independent reviews of a University's Equity Strategy implementation to ensure accountability.
 - All individuals appointed to University Governing Bodies must complete mandatory training to promote inclusion within governance meetings, as well as advancing the universities equity, diversity and inclusion agenda. This should include Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultural awareness training, LGBTIQ+ training, as well as training on unconscious bias, gender equity and disability awareness. This should extend to members of the University Executive.
- 4. Financial Sustainability and Equity Funding.** EPHEA strongly advocates for:
- Governance frameworks that prioritise equity funding as a core institutional responsibility, not as discretionary spending.
 - Embedding needs-based funding models into university budgeting processes to ensure sustainable resourcing for outreach, academic support, and student success programs.
- 5. Remuneration and Performance Policies for Senior University Staff.** EPHEA strong advocates for:
- Universities to be accountable for their role in social mobility with equity targets being tied to university performance funding models, recognizing institutions that effectively support underrepresented students.
 - Establishing and setting remuneration policies for senior university staff, with consideration given to attracting experienced university leaders to regionally based universities. Remuneration should incentivise and reflect this.
 - A performance framework to be developed to guide any remuneration increases to University Executive staff to ensure accountability. The performance framework should include measures around equity, diversity and inclusion to incentivise university leadership to make strong, ongoing commitments to advancing the diversity of staff and student populations within our universities.

Thank you for your time in reviewing this submission.

Kind Regards,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Kylie Austin', with a stylized flourish at the end.

Kylie Austin

President, Equity Practitioners in Higher Education Australasia (EPHEA)

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