



NCSEHE

National Centre for Student
Equity in Higher Education



Curtin University

Submission No 12

SUBMISSION TO HIGHER EDUCATION STANDARDS PANEL

Consultation on the Transparency of
Higher Education Admissions Processes

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About the National Centre for Student Equity in Higher Education

The Australian Government has established the National Centre for Student Equity in Higher Education (NCSEHE), currently based at Curtin University, with the purpose to inform public policy design, policy implementation and institutional practice in order to improve higher education participation and success for marginalised and disadvantaged people.

In Australia and internationally, the NCSEHE acts as a conduit for discussion and research on issues affecting student equity in higher education policy, practice and analysis. In keeping with its purpose, the NCSEHE attempts to connect student equity policy with the activities of higher education institutions and national equity outcomes, through its input into comparative assessment of institutional strategies, systemic assessments of policy achievements and assessments of national policymaking in view of this evidence. As part of this mission, the NCSEHE strives to 'close the gap' between equity policy, research and practice, conducting activities through three core programs:

- **Equity Policy and Program Evaluation (Evaluation Program)** – providing leadership and support in developing a national approach and resources to evaluate the impact of initiatives to increase participation of people from low socio-economic status (low SES) backgrounds and other equity groups in higher education.
- **Equity Policy and Planning Research (Research Program)** – furthering equity policy and planning in Australia, sharing knowledge and capabilities developed in Australia, and providing evidence on the impact of policy on equity outcomes in the system.
- **Student Equity Data and Analysis (Data and Analysis Program)** – providing analysis and availability of national datasets on student equity in higher education.

Introduction

This submission from the NCSEHE is a response to 11 questions raised in the recent *Issues Paper* from the Higher Education Standards Panel (HESP 2016), developed as part of its *Consultation on the Transparency of Higher Education Admissions Processes*.

Given the mission of the NCSEHE, this document will address the questions in relation to the use and reporting of the Australian Tertiary Admission Rank (ATAR) in the student equity context.

From the outset, it should be stated that transparency in university admissions is critical in higher education. This is particularly the case in a deregulated system where institutions are charged with making internal assessments about course load, whilst being aware of their obligation to ensure equity is taken into consideration. The importance of equity in access in modern Australian higher education system evolved from traditional concerns – the expansion of places and scholarships in the 1960s; fee abolition in the 1970s – to a more systemic approach first outlined in the 1988 *White Paper on Higher Education* (Dawkins 1988), released as part of a wide ranging series of reforms to the sector. These reforms included the expansion of places in the system, the introduction of the Higher Education Contribution Scheme (HECS) and the removal of the binary divide between universities and institutes of technology and colleges of advance education.

Underpinning this shift in the system was a requirement to widen higher education participation and the White Paper explicitly called for the ‘development of a statement of national equity objectives in higher education’ (Dawkins 1988; p.54). The initial response from government came in the policy document *A Fair Chance for All* (Department of Employment, Education and Training, 1990) which outlined the case for the identification and monitoring of access, participation and performance in regards to six identified equity groups:

- People from Socio-Economically Disadvantaged Backgrounds (Low SES students);
- People with Disability;
- Indigenous People;
- People from Rural and Isolated (Remote) Areas;
- Women (which became Women in Non-Traditional Areas – WINTA); and
- People from Non-English Speaking Backgrounds (NESB).

In the 25 years since the delineation of these equity groups, national policy has evolved considerably to the extent that institutional and system-wide reporting now incorporates equity group status, as defined by the groups, in student statistical collections on application and access, participation, retention, and post-study outcomes.

More recently, the *Review of Higher Education* (Bradley 2008) saw the Commonwealth support new policy initiatives to bolster infrastructure and funding to ensure access and participation among equity group students in higher education through initiatives such as the Higher Education Partnerships and Participation Programme (HEPPP), which funded university systems for student

outreach and support programs. The HEPPP and related programs have been vital in enabling universities to monitor and support equity group enrolment, and in some instances increase equity group representation, as Australian higher education shifted towards the Demand Driven Funding System (DDFS). A particular strength of the HEPPP is that it encourages collaborative action between institutions and program participants in comparison with alternative measures such as scholarships which tend to foster competition between individual institutions and program participants. This is very important in addressing the compounding issues attendant to higher education disadvantage.

As a gauge of the impact of these measures, Table 1 provides a snapshot of undergraduate domestic enrolment rates for all students and each of the equity groups in Table A Institutions. These are Australia's 38 largest higher education providers and the recipients of HEPPP funding. The data presented are from 2008 to 2014, with 2008 being the year before major funding changes and the DDFS were either floated, implemented or consolidated.

Table 1: Equity Group Higher Education Participation, 2007 to 2014,
Undergraduates, Various Years and Growth Rate from 2007

	2008	2010	2012	2014	Growth (08-14) % ¹
All Students	532,527	580,372	634,434	695,869	30.7%
Low SES	86,581	96,706	109,788	124,429	43.7%
Students with Disability	23,447	28,057	33,220	40,087	71.0%
Indigenous	6,820	7,943	9,005	10,850	59.1%
Women in Non-Traditional Areas (WINTA) ¹	103,120	107,959	114,382	123,544	19.8%
Regional	101,339	110,646	121,476	131,385	29.6%
Remote	5,240	5,532	5,804	6,303	20.3%
NESB	17,222	18,227	21,289	25,114	45.8%

Source: Koshy and Seymour (2015).

Note: 1. Growth rates are calculated from a base year of 2008.

A striking feature of this period in Australian higher education has been the rapid rate in expansion in undergraduate places with growth of nearly a third (30.7%) since 2008. This has been accompanied by higher rates of growth in undergraduate places among equity group students, with the exception of students in the WINTA, Regional and Remote groups.

Despite this growth, equity group students are still under-represented in Australian higher education. For instance, low SES students are defined as students who reside in postcodes which rank in the bottom 25% of all Australian postcodes using the Socio-Economic Index for Areas (SEIFA), a measure of socioeconomic advantage based on the ABS census collection. An equitable outcome would see low SES students take up 25% share of undergraduate places in Australian higher education. Instead, in 2014 low SES students accounted for 17.9% of all Australian undergraduates, albeit an improvement on their 2007 share of 16.2%. Similarly for the

other equity groups, under-representation is the historic norm. However, progress has been made in recent years in the context of a rapidly expanding higher education system.

This expansion in participation was made possible through the introduction of the DDFS, resulting in more “low ATAR” (or increasingly, “no ATAR”) students entering the university system while enabling universities to develop programs to bolster participation among disadvantaged groups of students. The ongoing integrity of admissions under the DDFS rests upon university systems and processes that allow for equitable access to higher education.

Response to Questions from the HESP Issues Paper

The NCSEHE’s response to the 11 questions raised in the HESP Issues Paper, are collected under five key headings:

- **Information Available to Students:** What information is currently available to students and how important is this in shaping the access decision?
- **Knowledge of the Higher Education Entrance System:** How important is knowledge of the higher education admissions process to access?
- **Reporting on Admissions and Administration of Admissions:** Would formal reporting of admissions outcomes and administration assist with policy development?
- **Public Presentation of Admissions Data:** To what extent should institutional admissions outcomes be reported and in what context?
- **Special Measures for Equity Students:** Are there special measures required for equity students?

Information Available to Students on Higher Education Opportunities

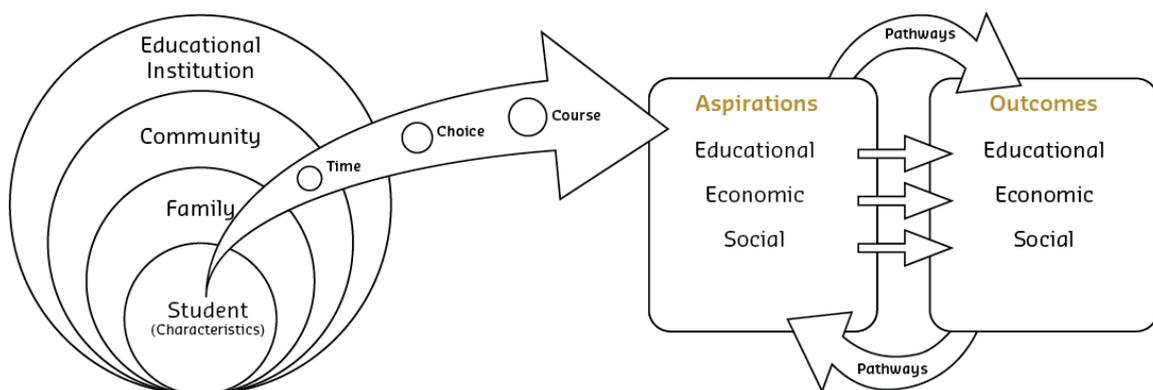
HESP Question 1

Based on your experience, what is the most important information needed to help potential higher education students determine which course to study and which institution to apply for?

Evidence from research in Australian higher education suggests that students make decisions on courses and institutions from a wide variety of sources. Cupitt and Costello (2014) utilise Robinson and Bornholt's (2007) model of progression into higher education to examine pathways by which students enter university. In this model, in order for desire to translate into enrolment and completion, students must also aspire to a particular course and a related career path which university will enable.

However, students are influenced by a number of external factors such as their familial environment, place in the community, friends and peers, and school (educational institution).

Figure 1: Student progression via multiple pathways



Source: Cupitt and Costello (2014)

The student progression model emphasises that for the above reason, student decision making is dependent on the social context in which students develop an aspiration to enter higher education and choice of course is influenced by these factors. Chief among these sources of information and influence for school-aged Year 12 completers is their household, beginning with parental preferences for higher education. A recent study by staff of the National Centre for Vocational Education Research (NCVER) found that young people whose parents express a preference for them to attend university are 11 times more likely to do so (Gemici et al. 2014). Additionally, the NCVER study finds that peer choices and aspirations figure prominently in influencing choice among students, and when combined with parental aspirations, are strongly influential in determining higher education aspirations among students almost irrespective of other factors.

In turn, the educational and socioeconomic background of parents informs and influences their educational preferences for their children (and through peer effects, other children), with a strong socioeconomic gradient being present in relation to higher education participation (as outlined above). Parents from higher socioeconomic backgrounds tend to have better knowledge of higher education in general, as well as knowledge of specific aspects of entry and course requirements, as well as information on the benefits of earning post-secondary qualifications. Further, Gore et al. (2015) find that university aspirants are more likely to use a wider variety of sources of information in their decision to enter university compared with non-aspirants. This makes access to official sources of information on courses and institutions all the more important in widening participation among school students who may not traditionally consider university as an option.

For these reasons, externally sourced or provided information can be critical to informing low socioeconomic and other equity group students of their opportunities for participation in higher education, as they are generally at a disadvantage in terms of parental and peer influences.

Publicly released information is thus critical and includes:

- Knowledge of the lifetime benefits of higher education attendance;
- Course requirements and suitability;
- Knowledge of entrance pre-requisites for new courses;
- Information on differences between institutional offerings, including such items as scholarships; and
- Knowledge of the system underpinning the ATAR and related issues such as bonus points and early entry schemes.

In effect, the provision of information on university entrance and participation at the community or school level reduces the disadvantages faced by students from disadvantaged backgrounds or those facing unique barriers to entering higher education.

Recommendation 1: That the reporting of courses, institutional offerings and entry requirements be undertaken in a manner that is publicly transparent and accessible, in view of the importance of this information to students from disadvantaged backgrounds – i.e. those students who don't benefit from strongly supportive household, parental and peer relationships that provide information on enrolling in higher education courses.

Knowledge of the Higher Education Entrance System

HESP Question 2

Is knowledge about how the ATAR rankings are calculated and published ‘cut-off’ thresholds a significant influencing factor on course and institution preferences? How could this information be made more accessible and useful?

HESP Question 3

Is there sufficient information about how ‘bonus points’ are awarded and used to adjust ‘raw’ ATARs sufficiently understood? Should the application of bonus points be more consistent across different institutions? Is the current variety of different bonus point rules appropriate to meet the needs of individual students and institutions?

HESP Question 4

Is there sufficient knowledge of the range of alternative admissions procedures employed by higher education institutions?

HESP Question 7

Is there an understanding of how such mechanisms as early offers, second round offers and forced offers affect the transparency of higher education entry? How, if at all, should these factors be dealt with for the purposes of transparency?

Students use ATAR cut-off scores as a proxy for course quality and they are therefore very influential in student decision-making in regard to course and institution choice. For this reason, reported ATAR cut-off scores need to be accurately reported in a verifiable and transparent manner.

Presently, there are a number of concerns with the ATAR reporting, including:

- Institutions have significant non-ATAR intakes for courses, diluting the signalling effect associated with reported cut-offs;
- Information on ATARs are rarely accompanied by information on alternative entry pathways and related topics such as bridging or enabling courses; and
- Information on ATARs for comparable courses across institutions is difficult to obtain from official sources. For instance, the Quality in Learning and Teaching (QILT 2016) website managed by the Commonwealth allows for course comparison through the reporting of indicators on the performance and experiences of students, yet it does not report ATAR entry requirements for course.

Requiring institutions to report accurate ATARs and other information on alternate entry pathways and bonus points would facilitate course comparisons across institutions. As discussed below, the

Commonwealth has a range of options for reporting on ATAR entry courses for Australian higher education courses, including through reporting via QILT website.

In addition to the lack of comparable information on ATARs and entry conditions across institutions, there is evidence to suggest that bonus points, alternative offer mechanisms and early offers are poorly understood by students, particularly those from low SES backgrounds in terms of their overall application strategy. Given the increased use of these measures across Australia, it is important for policymakers to consider how they can best be reported systematically and simply. Research conducted by Cardak et al. (2015a) indicates that low SES students are less likely to amend their university applications portfolios following the release of ATAR scores due to poor knowledge regarding admissions processes. As students who do not adjust their portfolios are less likely to receive an offer (Cardak et al. 2015b), low SES students in particular are unable to direct course and institution preferences appropriately due to lack of understanding and transparency in this area. The complexity around tertiary admissions for students from disadvantaged backgrounds was recently highlighted by Harvey et al. (2016). The authors found that low socio-economic status and regional Year 11 students did not know the process for applying to university. Furthermore, students were not aware of scholarships and equity schemes or the existence of principal recommendation schemes and were unlikely to understand the Year 12 subject weighting system.

For students from disadvantaged backgrounds, accessing reliable information about entry requirements to university is critical. This includes information on ATAR requirements. However, as a general rule ATAR cut-off scores for courses are either not generally accessible or not conveyed as part of an information pack on a given course. However, there are changes being made to the presentation of these data, but they tend to be tentative. For instance, QTAC (QTAC 2016), the tertiary applications centre for Queensland, provides a comprehensive and accessible coverage of course and institution entry. However, it currently separates information on minimum course entry marks (in Queensland's case until last year, the minimum "Overall Position" or OP) from general information, perhaps in part because Queensland is introducing the ATAR in its system this year. It is conceivable that in future years, ATAR entry information could accompany course information in this system and this would represent the clearest approach to providing students with required information. Further, related information on pre-requisites, bonus points, alternative admissions procedures and early offers could accompany information presented in this format.

The lack of transparency in relation to course ATARs and enrolment mechanisms throughout Australian higher education has a compounding effect whereby students with lower levels of social capital have to navigate an unnecessarily complex system to access higher education courses. In order to make informed choices, students should be able to access correct and transparently sourced information on entry requirements for courses.

Recommendation 2: The reporting of entry requirements must allow for a comprehensive comparison between institutions, including bonus points, alternative admissions policies and early and second offer policies. HESP should examine possibilities for the reporting of such data.

HESP Question 6

Do the current state-based Tertiary Admissions Centre arrangements adequately cope with students' desire for mobility to institutions across state borders? Would a more national approach to managing applications across borders be beneficial?

An issue that complicates the management and collection of information on ATAR in Australian higher education is the division of responsibilities between federal and state agencies, with the Commonwealth funding higher education institutions that have largely been established under state acts of parliament. As a consequence, access to higher education remains one of few areas in national policy which is still very much located at the state level with each state and territory having established its own tertiary applications centre (TAC).

However, it does not follow that a more national approach necessarily improves students' access to information on course entry, as Australia has a geographically segmented higher education system. As Koshy (2015) notes:

Australia's higher education system is still defined by state and territory boundaries, with 85.5 per cent of all applicants in 2014 applying to an institution in their home state (Australian Department of Education 2015b), with inter-state applicants typically being high performing students seeking admission into nationally competitive courses, such as Medicine, which accounted for 20.5 per cent of all inter-state applicants in 2014 with only 1.9 per cent of the student load (p. 4).

In effect, Australia appears to have a reduced requirement for greater levels of integration of higher education application processes at the national level given its moderate level of inter-state application. While national integration of TAC arrangements would no doubt facilitate inter-state applications, the evidence suggests that these will continue to be concentrated in courses such as medicine which typically have well-defined national standards and exposure for potential students.

Further, as long as the vast majority of students remain in their home state to attend university, the inclusion of inter-state options may only serve to increase the amount of information prospective students have to process for course offerings that are generally competitive in their jurisdictions (e.g. education, commerce, and nursing). This would only to increase the complexity of information gathering involved in the access decision. A related issue is that a national system for managing applications would also present complexities for administrators, who would have to work with eight secondary systems, with the risk being that the system becomes less responsive as a consequence.

One real benefit that would flow from greater cooperation between TACs would be a greater level of reporting on preference data at the national level, especially in relation to issues such as bonus points and early offers. However, this benefit could be easily induced through data collection by the Commonwealth from the TACs and institutions.

Recommendation 3: A more integrated approach to managing the operations of TACs will not necessarily improve the flow of information on ATARs to prospective students. However, greater cooperation between TACs across states, perhaps organised by the Commonwealth, would provide greater levels of data for purposes of comparison.

Reporting on Admissions and Administration

HESP Question 5

Should there be an annual report of the proportion of students accepted into courses by each higher education institution on the basis of their ATARs and/or what the median ATARs was for each course?

Reporting on admissions outcomes is important from both the perspective of equity and efficiency. Presently, the Australian Government Department of Education and Training reports on applications, offers and admissions Australia-wide through its annual publication *Undergraduate Applications and Offers*. The most recent issue of this publication was published in May 2015 (Australian Government Department of Education and Training 2015). The report focuses on aggregate trends in application numbers, with system-wide breakdowns by state, ATAR band, broad field of education, and various, but not all, equity groups including Low SES, Indigenous, and Regional and Remote.

However, the reporting of undergraduate applications and offers does not provide a central point for reporting on *minimum, median or quartile* ATAR scores of the entering class at the institutional level. Instead, reporting of ATAR cut-off scores occurs through individual Tertiary Admissions Centres (TACs) across Australia and is typically restricted to reporting minimum entry levels. By contrast, in the United States, individual institutional data on entry requirements is available in nation-wide university and college rankings. The most widely cited institutional ranking, *U.S. News & World Report's Best Colleges (National University Rankings)* reports statistics on results from the Scholastic Aptitude Test (SAT) for the entering undergraduate class at the 25th and 75th percentiles (U.S. News & World 2016).

However, one of the critical dangers with reporting such data is that entrance ATARs, like the SAT in the US, become overly influential in the discourse surrounding higher education. This is particularly problematic for equity students for whom ATARs are often only one of many signals of

their academic ability. For instance, Li and Dockery (2014) found that while ATAR is a strong indicator of future academic success, students from less privileged schools performed better in university than expected given their ATAR. This finding reflects the fact that ATAR scores to some extent also measure the general socioeconomic background of students and that the reporting of them in a competitive setting can convey an inaccurate measure of their true signal and, it follows, the academic value of courses ranked on the basis of ATAR.

While the ATAR is not necessarily a strong indicator of student ability or preparedness in all cases, particularly among equity students, its use in administrative processes governing access to higher education should be transparent.

Recommendation 4: The public reporting of entry requirements should allow for a comprehensive comparison between institutions, including bonus points, alternative admissions policies and early and second offer policies (also see Recommendation 5).

Public Presentation of Admissions Data

HESP Question 8

What information or enhancements do you think should be added to the Australian Government's Quality Indicators for Learning and Teaching (QILT) website?

HESP Question 9

How best should comparable information on student admissions procedures be made available to the public? What is the most appropriate and effective way to communicate information to students? What information or enhancements do you think should be added to Tertiary Admission Centre websites, university and non-university institution websites, and/or Australian Government websites such as QILT and Study Assist?

QILT currently reports a wide range of institutionally specific statistics through its website (<https://www.qilt.edu.au/>). However, it does not report ATAR averages for commencing students at institutions or retention and completion data in view of ATAR brackets. In many ways, this is an oversight as one of QILT's intended functions is to inform applicants of differences in course offerings and outcomes among institutions. Including information on ATAR entry marks for courses in QILT is a step towards increasing information for students. Importantly, this should only be implemented with the proviso that students understand the complete context of enrolment in a given course, including information on alternative entry, bonus points and scholarships.

Aside from QILT, the state-based TACs would benefit from a more uniform presentation of entrance related information at the course level, including information on ATAR cut-offs from the

previous year and indications as to the importance of pre-requisites, bonus points and early offer options for a given course or institution in general. It is also possible that additional information could be provided through these systems, such as information on scholarships or course-related student support systems and enabling programs.

Recommendation 5: QILT should build into its reporting framework a data release for higher education courses which includes entrance data. Other state-based TACs should follow the lead of QTAC and develop information portals for prospective students. The TACs should also be encouraged to provide comprehensive information on all entrance-related requirements for a given course.

Special Measures for Equity Students

HESP Question 10

What special measures are needed to ensure equity of access for disadvantaged students?

Recommendations 1 to 5 above work to the advantage of the general applicant population in Australian higher education and equity students in particular. Well-designed information portals such as QILT and QTAC provide the basis for reporting consistent data on entry requirements by course and institution. This can potentially reduce the requirement for students to access this information elsewhere and thus the unfair advantage enjoyed by students in the general population. In effect, the clearer, broader presentation of entry information benefits everyone and “levels the playing field” for all applicants at the same time.

Beyond the general response discussed above, there is another specific measure that would benefit equity students. In 2014, the Australian Government Department of Education and Training commissioned the NCSEHE to undertake a scoping study into the Equity Performance Framework (EPF) – a reporting framework for access, performance and outcome issues in higher education for Australia’s six identified equity groups (Pitman & Koshy 2015). This study is presently before the Department and provides recommendations on how EPF data can be reported at the institutional level, including an option for reporting through QILT. An important feature of the EPF is that it links university reporting on equity students to their access data such as ATAR and also, conceivably, data on bonus points, enabling program entry and other aspects of access.

The EPF will allow institutions and policymakers to access student performance on the basis of their entry criteria and provide feedback on the extent to which entry systems are adequately allowing for the selection of students.

Recommendation 6: The Australian Government Department of Education and Training's Equity Performance Framework (EPF), either in a standalone format, or through the QILT site be modified to provide data on institutional performance in regard to average ATAR entry scores, with reporting by broad course level and equity group membership.

HESP Question 11

Can you suggest any other changes that would improve public awareness and understanding of tertiary admissions processes?

More generally, from an equity perspective, the provision of more information on ATAR and entrance requirements is one of many initiatives that would assist in widening higher education participation. Other critical interventions include outreach programs managed by universities (and often funded through HEPPP), which have been shown to have a positive impact on student enrolment.

Major programs associated with HEPPP funding are summarised in NCSEHE (2013) and NCSEHE (2014). The programs typically combine information and experience activities with direct assistance to students in identifying and applying to university course. For instance, a program organised by Deakin University, the Deakin Engagement and Access Program (DEAP), enables young people's participation in higher education by improving their capacity to achieve academically, developing an understanding of pathways and preparing students for the transition to university. DEAP facilitates a program of campus and in-school activities for Year 7 to 12 schools and also includes activities around academic enrichment, study skills and attendance at Special Entry Access Scheme (SEAS) workshops.

There is growing evidence to suggest that HEPPP-funded programs have had a positive influence in terms of reducing barriers to accessing higher education among equity students. In 2014 an NCSEHE study of the Learn Experience Access Professions (LEAP) project in Victoria, found that students targeted through LEAP saw an increase in knowledge of university options available to them (NCSEHE 2014b, p.18), yet at the same time, students still nominated teachers and VTAC for information on pathways (NCSEHE 2014b, p.22). In effect, their learning through LEAP reinforced their use of official channels for obtaining course information.

Similarly, the student Ambassador program is an effective strategy for imparting information to students, particularly those from low SES backgrounds, where role models and support from families and peers for tertiary aspirations is lacking (Cupitt, Costello & Mitchell, 2015). Undertaken by the Queensland Widening Tertiary Participation Consortium, the process involves student Ambassadors, especially those who have come from similar backgrounds to the younger students they are working with, to break down the myths and misconceptions related to tertiary study. The

engagement process involved Ambassadors as story-tellers, using narratives of their own journeys to tertiary study. In the words of Austin and Hatt (2005, p. 4), “the message is particularly powerful because it is coming from messengers who are talking from their own lived experience”.

Currently the National Priorities Pool funded ‘**Social marketing strategy to low SES communities**’ project is investigating an appropriate cost effective national social marketing strategy for low SES students and communities that will assist universities to increase awareness of and raise aspiration to higher education. There is evidence that university outreach programs in Australia provide students with information to break down a series of barriers to entering university and that university outreach and tertiary admissions centres can act jointly to reinforce these advantages.

Recommendation 7: In today’s education environment, there is a growing role for the use of university outreach programs to direct students especially those from low SES backgrounds to information sources on course and institution choices.

Summary of Recommendations

This submission makes the following recommendations on improving the transparency of higher education admissions processes:

Recommendation 1: That the reporting of courses, institutional offerings and entry requirements be undertaken in a manner that is publicly transparent and accessible, in view of the importance of this information to students from disadvantaged backgrounds – i.e. those students who don't benefit from strongly supportive household, parental and peer relationships that provide information on enrolling in higher education courses.

Recommendation 2: The reporting of entry requirements must allow for a comprehensive comparison between institutions, including bonus points, alternative admissions policies and early and second offer policies. HESP should examine possibilities for the reporting of such data.

Recommendation 3: A more integrated approach to managing the operations of TACs will not necessarily improve the flow of information on ATARs to prospective students. However, greater cooperation between TACs across states, perhaps organised by the Commonwealth, would provide greater levels of data for purposes of comparison.

Recommendation 4: The public reporting of entry requirements should allow for a comprehensive comparison between institutions, including bonus points, alternative admissions policies and early and second offer policies (also see Recommendation 5).

Recommendation 5: QILT should build into its reporting framework a data release for higher education courses which includes entrance data. Other state-based TACs should follow the lead of QTAC and develop information portals for prospective students. The TACs should also be encouraged to provide comprehensive information on all entrance-related requirements for a given course.

Recommendation 6: The Australian Government Department of Education and Training's Equity Performance Framework (EPF), either in a standalone format or through the QILT site, be modified to provide data on institutional performance in regard to average ATAR entry scores, with reporting by broad course level and equity group membership.

Recommendation 7: In today's education environment, there is a growing role for the use of university outreach programs to direct students especially those from low SES backgrounds to information sources on course and institution choices.

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