

SPEECH

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and Workplace Relations**

**Speech and presentation of the Australian Awards
for University Teaching at
The Australian Learning and Teaching Council
Awards and Citations Ceremony**

Sydney Opera House

**7:00 pm, Tuesday 16 August 2011
(Speech to be delivered at 8:20pm)**

Thank you Monica for your kind introduction.

- Traditional owners
- Professor John Hay, Chair of the Australian Learning and Teaching Council board,
- Board members, former and current,
- Dr Carol Nicoll, CEO of the ALTC,
- Vice-Chancellors,
- Past recipients of Awards,
- Awardees,
- Ladies and gentlemen.

Introduction

Tonight I represent the Prime Minister Julia Gillard, and the Minister for Tertiary Education, Skills, Jobs and Workplace Relations, Senator Chris Evans.

They send their apologies because Parliament is sitting and they cannot get away, not matter how much they might like to. They send their sincere congratulations to ALTC and to awardees.

The value of learning and teaching

Tonight we celebrate learning and teaching.

We know that learning is life-changing.

When a person reaches their potential through learning, the benefits flow not only to them; but also to Australia's productivity, society, and international influence.

We know there is a causal link between excellent teaching and productive learning outcomes.

We celebrate that link tonight, by celebrating your excellence in teaching.

Your high-quality teaching inspires students to achieve more than they ever dreamed.

The legacy of the ALTC

Tonight we also celebrate the Australian Learning and Teaching Council.

The ALTC and its predecessor the Carrick Institute have provided for the first time a clear focus on teaching and learning.

The Council has been a leader in establishing sustainable teaching and learning networks.

The Council's influence is felt across institutions, disciplines, Deans, Councils and professional associations.

The Council has initiated vital debates on big issues such as academic standards, measuring teaching quality and the effects of large classes.

The ALTC has helped change the culture of Australian universities.

The Council's work will influence higher education in Australia well into the future.

As Secretary of the education department in the Australian Government since 2004, I have been here for the whole journey!

I recall a university which, in the very first round of Awards, won nothing.

To their credit, the Vice-Chancellor implemented a rigorous program of mentoring and expert support in teaching and learning.

In the Awards the following year I seem to recall they made a very good showing indeed! The Awards themselves make a real difference.

The importance of tonight's awards

And so we also celebrate the power of Awards, and Citations, tonight.

The Awards and Citations give national recognition to excellence and identify role models who inspire others.

I have heard, for example, of an Aboriginal academic who used the funding she received for her award to enhance her own cultural identity.

This fed into her research.

Now, she is using this work to increase the number of Indigenous students and improve the quality of their experience by helping teachers address their needs.

These awards and citations create a ripple effect that improves learning experiences for all students.

The way forward

I acknowledge these are the last awards to be held under the banner of the ALTC.

The Government, and I, are committed to maintaining the legacy of the ALTC.

We all recognise the environment in higher education has changed significantly.

In 2011, we find ourselves on the doorstep of a demand-driven environment shored up by realistic indexation.

We have an ambitious participation target and an ambitious equity target.

The more open system will be buttressed by new quality arrangements, particularly through TEQSA. There will also be further development of new learning and teaching indicators.

The Government is investing almost \$26 billion over the next four years in pursuit of this vision.

Maintaining ALTC's contributions is critical to achieving the Government's vision of a better supported and more inclusive system.

The transition and acknowledgements of key contributors

My Department is working closely with the ALTC to ensure the transition is as seamless as possible.

I look forward to welcoming some of Dr Nicoll's staff into the Department.

I thank personally Dr Nicoll for her high-level leadership and professionalism.

Carol — through your strong leadership of ALTC you have helped raise the calibre of teaching and learning across the whole sector.

I also thank ALTC staff for your contribution, including during this period of transition.

I am absolutely delighted that Carol has been appointed as Chief Commissioner of TEQSA.

Your appointment Carol is a tribute to your sectoral leadership and of course will also help continue ALTC's momentum.

I would also like to pay tribute to the ALTC Board Chair, Professor John Hay.

Professor Hay has been with the ALTC Board since day one. You have steered successfully the evolution of the company over the past seven years.

Thank you also to ALTC Board members who since 2004 include:

- Tim Besley

- Professor Margaret Gardner,
- Professor Daryl Le Grew,
- Professor Ian O'Connor,
- Professor Jane den Hollander,
- Dr George Brown,
- and Professor Sandra Harding.

Conclusion

Ladies and gentlemen

All Australians who aspire to a university education deserve an education of the highest quality.

Recognition of excellence in teaching and learning inspires the whole sector to be its best for our students.

I look forward to working closely with you as we continue to promote excellence in teaching and learning.

I bring congratulations from the Prime Minister and Senator Evans to all awardees.

I add my own congratulations to you.

You are role models who will inspire others for many years to come.

Congratulations and thank you.