



23 October 2020

Submission to the Education and Employment Legislation Committee: Higher Education Legislation Amendment (Provider Category Standards and Other Measures) Bill 2020

NATSIHEC appreciates the opportunity to provide a submission to the Education and Employment Legislation Committee.

The National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Higher Education Consortium (Aboriginal Corporation) (NATSIHEC) has a membership of over 80 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander academic and professional staff employed across the higher education sector. NATSIHEC was established in the 1990s (previous National Indigenous Higher Education Network) and provide high level advice on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander higher education to both Department of Education, Skills and Employment (DESE) and the National Indigenous Australian Agency (NIAA). NATSIHEC also has MoU partnership agreements with Universities Australia (UA) and the Tertiary Education Quality and Standards Agency (TEQSA), as well as other stakeholder collaborations.

NATSIHEC recently led a commissioned report for the DESE on the Advancement of Indigenous Higher Education in Australian Universities and worked collaboratively with UA to deliver the first National Indigenous Higher Education Strategy.

For further information on NATSIHEC, www.natsihec.edu.au

Provider Category Standards

The *Review of the Higher Education Provider Category Standards* made recommendations on the current provider categories to ensure that they were appropriate in an evolving higher education environment. The review identified that the current categories such as the 'University of Specialisation' category continued to pose challenges for a First Nations University to be recognised, as although the university would specialise in Indigenous higher education their teaching and research would be multi-disciplinary spanning multiple teaching and research codes.

NATSIHEC supports the recommendations of the review to continue to define universities to be institutions that contribute both scholarly teaching and research. However, the category guidelines should not limit the opportunity of a future First Nations University, for example Bachelor Institute. Nor should it limit recognition of the unique position of Indigenous higher education, teaching and research.



This has broader implications for Indigenous Australia in terms of maintaining an aspiration for having our own higher education institution into the future for our next generations, but also as a close the gap circuit breaker in disrupting the perpetuity of Indigenous educational disadvantage where Indigenous students can access a facility that embodies Indigenous values, ways of being and knowledges.

Further to this NATSIHEC is in favour of setting benchmarks for the 'Australian University' category in relation to the quality and quantity of research that contributes to our communities, particularly as it relates to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities.

We are also supportive of the amendments to the Higher Education Legislation Amendment (Provider Category Standards and Other Measures) Bill 2020 that broaden the definition within the *Higher Education Support Act 2003* from Indigenous students to Indigenous Australians to allow for prospective student programs to be considered.

Yours sincerely

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