Pipeline not flowing

Last week’s Australian Council of Learned Academies review of research training reported how students from disadvantaged backgrounds are under-represented in higher degree studies. The figures for NESB postgrads in particular have recently gone backwards big-time. But as a learned reader reports, the feds were supposed to have addressed this last decade. In 2008 the House of Representatives standing committee on industry, science and innovation’s recommended, “the Australian Government attach additional funds to research training scheme places that are secured by minority and under-represented students.” To which La Trobe researchers Harvey and Andrewartha report the Feds replied that as undergraduate enrolments from disadvantaged groups reached the 20 per cent target so postgrads from them would grow. Sounded plausible then but it hasn’t happened.