The Higher Education Participation and Partnerships Programme is under evaluation at present, with the Australian Government Department of Education and Training awarding the contract to ACIL Allen Consulting’s Melbourne office. Many of you are providing valuable feedback as an important component of the HEPPP Review. There is also a public submission process underway, to which you are invited to contribute. The NCSEHE will be lodging a submission from its unique perspective, as will the Equity Practitioners in Higher Education Australasia (EPHEA) Committee. More information on the HEPPP evaluation process is available on the ACIL Allen website.

ACIL Allen Consulting (Perth) has been engaged to evaluate the NCSEHE also during 2016. The evaluation process commenced in mid-June 2016 and is scheduled for completion in November 2016. The evaluators are currently reviewing the Centre’s outputs and undertaking data collection, during which time you may be contacted to provide feedback on the NCSEHE and its impact. If you are contacted by a member of the ACIL Allen team, I encourage you to participate in this very important process and thank you for your ongoing support.

On Friday 19 August, Universities Australia held its Higher Education Access, Participation and Equity Policy Workshop in Canberra. The workshop was attended by over 90 participants from 35 universities across Australia and was focused on engaging with the higher education sector in light of the current public policy discussion on university funding and the HEPPP.

Chaired by Universities Australia Chief Executive Ms Belinda Robinson, the workshop benefitted greatly from the contributions of Professor Barney Glover, UA Chair, and a panel comprising Ms Mary Kelly (QUT), Professor Sue Willis (Monash) and Dr Andrew Harvey (La Trobe).
Mary emphasised that negotiating outreach and access issues particularly required coherent policy over the long-term as change takes time. HEPPP in its current form and focus is a crucial component driving the positive changes seen in the sector to date. Mary also discussed the ‘scaffolding’ needed by students, to support their retention and success in higher education, and spoke to the need for financial support by way of grants rather than loans, as an important piece of the puzzle.

Professor Sue Willis called for a more nuanced approach to analysing and reporting student equity data and for this to be grounded in broader social discussions around important topics such as social mobility, while Dr Andrew Harvey stressed the importance of enabling programs in supporting broader access to higher education, pointing to evidence from a recent NCSEHE report he co-authored on this issue.

Following the panel presentations, workshop participants had an opportunity to break into groups and discuss access and success in higher education during two distinct sessions. Some of the key observations from both sessions included:

- It is critical for the sector to defend HEPPP and emphasise the importance of ongoing funding for outreach work in particular.
- It is important to clearly define equity status in higher education, including the issue of compounding status. The proposed review of equity groups in Australia presents a significant opportunity to progress this issue.
- There is a strong requirement for better monitoring of outreach and enabling programs, with a comprehensive structure for tracking and reviewing outcomes across programs and institutions.
- There is a need for a greater acknowledgement that equity programs led to innovations that benefited all students and not just equity students.
- It is important to link equity policy to broader social policy and issues such as income mobility and social aspiration.
- Equity policy in outreach and success cannot be developed in isolation of other government policies (e.g. income support for students) and greater levels of cooperation need to be encouraged between departments and institutions to ensure we get the best outcomes.

Universities Australia will shortly release a comprehensive summary of the day’s findings. Coming as it has at a critical time for Australian
equity policy, it is hoped the ideas from the workshop will provide some impetus for future discussion and action.

Throughout these ongoing debates, it is important that we remember that education is a lifelong journey. The ABC recently shared a wonderful example of this lifelong focus when featuring PhD recipient, 90-year old Joan Webb from Launceston, Tasmania. Joan’s thesis is based on a creative writing group she facilitates in an aged care facility and touches on the issues of ageism, action and empowerment.

A final reminder that nominations for the Equity Fellows Programme close at 5pm WST this Friday, 2 September 2016. No extensions will be granted and so we encourage those of you who intend to submit a nomination to do so before the 5pm deadline. All nominations received will be confirmed via reply email.

Kind regards
Professor Sue Trinidad
Director
National Centre for Student Equity in Higher Education

Not There Yet

This report reviews the literature and analyses enrolment data from the Australian Government Department of Education and Training and also refers to Census data from the Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS), with a view to contributing to discussions about the future directions in policy and action, including the development of targeted outreach and engagement programs for refugee background students.

Understanding the Completion Patterns of Equity Students in Regional Universities

Regional universities play an important role in widening access to, and increasing participation in, higher education, and subsequently contributing to the development of dynamic local communities. The success of students who study at regional universities is critical to building regional capacity and a significant social justice issue. It is a research priority in 2016 for the National Centre for Student Equity in Higher Education.
Disclosure as an Equity Issue in Higher Education

Dr Erica Southgate, Dr Rachel Buchanan and Ms Susan Grimes from The University of Newcastle Australia invite you to attend a free seminar. On Thursday 8 September, Disclosure as an Equity Issue in Higher Education will focus on the disclosure of disability, first-in-family status, digital footprint and identity. For more information and to register, please see the seminar flyer (272Kb PDF) or contact Dr Erica Southgate at erica.southgate@newcastle.edu.au.

AFR Higher Education Awards

Nominations for the Australian Financial Review’s Education Awards are now open. The Education Awards recognise the valuable contribution made by the higher education sector to Australia’s quality of life. In 2015, UWA won an award in the Equity and Opportunity category for its Aspire UWA program.