

Submission
No 24

INQUIRY INTO THE GOVERNANCE OF NSW UNIVERSITIES

Organisation: Council of Australian Postgraduate Associations Incorporated
Name: Mr Phil Betts
Position: CAPA Eastern Region Secretary
Date received: 19/02/2009

The Director

General Purpose Standing Committee No. 2
Parliament House
Macquarie St
Sydney NSW 2000

Re: Inquiry into the governance of NSW universities

This submission is made on behalf of the Eastern Region of the Council of Australian Postgraduate Associations (CAPA). The Eastern Region is comprised of all public universities within NSW and the ACT. This submission is intended to draw attention to the composition of university governing bodies (councils) within New South Wales, and specifically the role of designated postgraduate representation on these bodies. CAPA would like to thank the Standing Committee for invitation to participate in the inquiry.

CAPA wishes to address the following items from the inquiry Terms of Reference:

- 3. Identification of the roles and responsibilities of the Vice-Chancellor, the governing body and the Chancellor in relation to the formation of University policy and grievance procedures, and the communication of such policies to the student body**
- 8. The representation on governing bodies, and their committees, of staff and students and the current and appropriate balance between external members and elected representatives,**

The value of student representation and input on university committees is widely recognised, and is reflected in all public NSW universities by the inclusion of elected student representatives on their highest governing bodies. As the most numerous and visible stakeholders of a university, students are directly or indirectly affected by a wide range of policy decisions, as reflected by item 3 of the Terms of Reference. Students are most likely to experience the implications of policies created and approved by

council, providing a unique vantage point that is invaluable when it comes to formulating policies and planning for their implementation. CAPA recognises the value of student representatives on university governing bodies, and advocates for the continuation of this practice.

Most Australian universities have at least two student representatives on their council; a minimum of one undergraduate and one postgraduate. This distinction recognises the variation between the undergraduate and postgraduate student experience, needs and expectations, all of which can differ significantly based on the cohorts position on their academic path. This distinction also serves to ensure representation is equitable. In situations where both undergraduate and postgraduate students are in competition for the same popularly elected position, postgraduate students are at a significant disadvantage. The nature of undergraduate study, networking opportunities and participation in clubs and societies, as well as the sheer volume of undergraduate students places significant barriers to postgraduate participation. CAPA commends those universities that include separate provisions for postgraduate representation on their governing bodies. Table 1 highlights the membership composition of university councils across NSW, and the student representation on these bodies¹:

	Number of student representatives	Distinct UG and PG positions	Total number of councilors
Charles Sturt University	2	Y	18
Macquarie University	1	N	18
Southern Cross University	1	N	19
The University of New England	2	Y	19
The University of New South Wales	2	Y	22
The University of Newcastle	2	Y	20
The University of Sydney	2	Y	22
University of Technology, Sydney	2	Y	20
University of Western Sydney	2	Y	18
University of Wollongong	2	Y	19

In NSW, Macquarie University and Southern Cross University are limited to a single student representative position. CAPA recommends the expansion of the councils of Macquarie University and

¹ Source: Various university governing body webpages, accessed 19/02/09

<http://www.csu.edu.au/division/vcoffice/uc/membership/index.htm>

<http://universitycouncil.mq.edu.au/members.html>

<http://www.scu.edu.au/governance/council/index.php/14/>

<http://www.une.edu.au/secretariat/council-members.php>

http://www.secretariat.unsw.edu.au/council/Council_member_biographies.htm

<http://www.newcastle.edu.au/service/committees/council/membership/index.html>

<http://www.usyd.edu.au/senate/category.shtml>

<http://www.gsu.uts.edu.au/council/index.html>

http://www.uws.edu.au/about_uws/uws/governance/board_of_trustees/board_of_trustees_membership2

<http://www.uow.edu.au/governance/committees/council/UOW000322.html>

Southern Cross University to include two student members, with distinct undergraduate and postgraduate positions.

In addition to the general principles of equitable representation, a further argument should be made for the addition of a postgraduate representative to Macquarie University's council. Table 2 presents the 2007 enrolment figures for NSW universities in 2007²:

	Postgraduates	Undergraduates	Combined	Percentage of Postgraduates
Charles Sturt University	8,501	23,858	32,359	26.27%
Macquarie University	11,721	18,506	30,227	38.78%
Southern Cross University	2,833	11,355	14,188	19.97%
The University of New England	5,261	11,927	17,188	30.61%
The University of New South Wales	15,094	25,973	41,067	36.75%
The University of Newcastle	5,854	18,734	24,588	23.81%
The University of Sydney	15,566	30,060	45,626	34.12%
University of Technology, Sydney	10,556	21,244	31,800	33.19%
University of Western Sydney	5,620	26,587	32,207	17.45%
University of Wollongong	6,907	14,303	21,210	32.56%

Macquarie's postgraduate enrolments make up the highest ratio of postgraduates to undergraduates in NSW. In addition, it has the third largest postgraduate population in the state. To adequately represent a student body of over 30,000, CAPA strongly encourages the addition of a postgraduate representative to the Macquarie University Council.

CAPA recognises the limitations on the size of governing bodies to maintain functionality. The addition of an extra member to the councils of both Macquarie University and Southern Cross University will take their number to 19 and 20 respectively, which we feel will enhance the councils, rather than hinder.

We look forward to the outcomes of this inquiry, and university governance that engages all of the appropriate stakeholders in public universities effectively.

Yours sincerely,

Phil Betts
CAPA Eastern Region Secretary

² Source: DEEWR, 2007 Full Year Student Summary tables - Public Universities , available from http://www.dest.gov.au/sectors/higher_education/publications_resources/profiles/Students_2007_full_year_.htm accessed 18/02/09