Funding outlook: at best more of the same - Hudson

The tertiary education sector has been warned that while increased Federal funding for additional enrolments next year represents 'a very significant breakthrough,' the breakthrough might not be permanent.

The warning came from Mr Hugh Hudson, Chairman of the Commonwealth Tertiary Education Commission, in a wide-ranging address to the Annual Conference of the Australian Institute of Tertiary Education Administrators in Brisbane.

Mr Hudson noted that the Federal Budget has allocated $1.1 million to pay for approximately 2000 additional students in 1986 ... a 50 percent increase on the marginal funding rate that applied for 1985.

But the fact that the Government decided on that level for this year did not guarantee it would continue to fund additional enrolments at the level in future.

'The Government has requested a review of the productivity of the higher education system to be undertaken by a committee with myself as chairman, some outside representation and nominees from the Vice-Chancellors' Committee and the Committee of Directors and Principals,' Mr Hudson said.

'The Government clearly expects that methods can be adopted which ensure that the Government, acting on behalf of the taxpayer, is satisfied as to the manner in which the taxpayer's dollar is spent.'

Mr Hudson said this review would be coming at the end of a decade of 'extraordinary difficulty for tertiary education and, more particularly, higher education.'

Real resources per student had fallen by four percent in universities and 11 percent in Colleges of Advanced Education.

At the same time, social and legislative changes had occurred which effectively made a very significant increase in costs.

These included the abolition of 'substantially more 'democratic' decision-making procedures (which) have increased administrative costs and added to the process of decision-making more difficult and time consuming' and legislative and other requirements in relation to issues such as sex discrimination, affirmative action, eality of opportunity, freedom of information and industrial relations.

'All of these pressures increase the costs of administration and therefore impact adversely on educational standards,' Mr Hudson said.

'If the prime function of colleges is to provide quality education for their students, and the prime functions of universities are effective research and, again, quality education for students, it would appear that the last decade has been one which, on balance, has lowered the ability of higher educational institutions to carry out effectively their prime functions.'

The cuts occurred when the higher education sector failed to dispel the idea, 'commonplace within the community at large,' that higher education was excessively expensive and loosely administered.

'Anecdotal evidence is still available in the system to be removed by an appropriate financial controller,' Mr Hudson said.

He said higher education institutions had not been very effective in defending themselves in the broad political context during the decade.

This was made evident by the fact that while funding for higher education was falling by eight percent overall, funding for primary and secondary education was improving by 50 percent in real terms.

Mr Hudson suggested this need not have happened...that at least part of the problem was the timidity or lack of unanimity of higher education in responding to governments.

'The system has a substantial kick if it ever comes to exercise it' he said.

'If you get a degree of unanimity on certain issues...that does have a significant impact particularly if the facts are correct and the arguments are such that they have to be answered.'

'It is important to recognise also that in normal circumstances, the Vice-Chancellors' Committee and the Committee of Directors and Principals have automatic access not only to our Commission and the Minister, but if and when required, they can get to the Prime Minister too.'

Mr Hudson pointed out that while higher education funding was falling by eight percent overall in real terms, it was also falling by 33 percent as a proportion of Commonwealth outlays (from 4.87 percent to 3.27 percent) and 27 percent as a proportion of Gross Domestic Product (from 1.4 to 1.02 percent).

This was compensated for only in small part by growth in the TAFE sector (from 0.31 to 0.67 percent of Commonwealth outlays, 0.09 to 0.18 percent of GDP).

Mr Hudson held out no hope of any significant improvement in these figures, even in the longer term.

Canoe designers try a new tack

Mr Plail, who is president of the Chisholm Concrete Canoe Club, says the canoes developed by Chisholm students last year were something of a breakthrough because for the first time they used concrete moulds.

'Traditionally we made a steel sub-frame, covered it with wire mesh then cemented it up and hoped for the best.'

The very early models looked like a bathtub and weighed about 500 kilograms.'

The canoes developed by Mr Plail and Mr Mackay has come a long way from that.

At 60-70 kgs, it will be close to optimum weight and roughly the same weight as a fibreglass canoe, and importantly, it will achieve optimum strength/weight ratio.

The secret is in the reinforcement - a combination of polyester spun lace fabric imported from the USA used to bind fibre-reinforced cement (instead of plain cement) mortar used in past years, supplied to the designers by sponsors, AV Synotec P/L.

The result, Mr Plail says, is a lighter, faster more durable craft.

Work on the canoes has taken several months, with much of that time being taken up with research and testing of samples for bonding strength, and other factors such as getting right the percentages of cement and cement additives.

Sponsored by the Concrete Institute of Victoria, the concrete canoe races have been an annual event since 1977.

In the Student and Graduate Section of the competition, entries come from a range of tertiary institutions, where the emphasis is on students applying the knowledge gained in their courses in the design and construction of the canoes.

This year the event will be held at Morrell Landing on the Yarra on Sunday 6 October.

Chisholm concrete canoe enthusiasts are confident about their chances of success in the 1985 Annual Concrete Canoe Races on the Yarra River next month.

Last year, three Chisholm-built canoes were raced, and the results couldn't have been better, with trophies won for the best design, best team and the overall championship.

This year, civil engineering students, Andrew Plail and Peter Mackay, have come up with a canoe that should be a worthy successor to last year's entries.

'Each year we try to improve on the previous year's design,' says Mr Plail, who is president of the Chisholm Concrete Canoe Club.

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Below Mr Plail and co-designer Peter Mackay with the moulded canoe.

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Industry automation: a question of survival says Adams

The Robotics Centre is putting its robot familiarisation seminars into industry on a regular footing.

The Centre's Acting Director, Mr. Adams, responds to the first two seminars earlier this year was such that they will repeat the exercise on a monthly basis.

'Anyone who has tried to talk automation to Australian industry knows the need for such familiarisation seminars,' he says, 'and has been for a long time.'

'The response to our first two seminars shows that - at least the demand is there as well.'

As time passes that demand for more sophisticated technology in Australian industry and a successful commercial exploler of hi-tech Mr. Adams is heartened by the demand for the seminars.

'I believe we are seeing the beginning of a turnaround in attitudes in business and industry... we've got a period where that message that at least need to know what the new technology is all about.'

'That's the first step they have to take to bring their industry up to date.'

It is for reason that Mr. Adams says, managing the robot technology message direct to industry is for the Centre for Robotics' main mission.

Mr. Adams shares the view of many that manufacturing's current malaise is largely due to its reluctance to pick up new technology.

'The Centre's mission in life is to complement the academic robot training at Chisholm by helping people to justify the need for more sophisticated technology,' he says.

'Somehow people must be motivated so they see the need and want to be involved - our industry is still completely around that, from helping people to see the need, to actually justifying the message that they at least need to know what the new technology is all about.'

'As long as the new technology is attractive, they will adopt it.'

Traditionally,' Mr. Adams says, "if industry is looking at investment proposals, it is only interested in pay-back criteria, that is, how short a period before the new investment has paid for itself.

'With automation considerations the business which is presently highly successful and viable but not using much new technology is reluctant to face a competitor with a high degree of automation could completely steal the market.'

In such a circumstance, automation is essential not as an investment but as a survival tactic to ensure continued competitiveness, in the ability of the business over the ensuing years.

Mr. Adams says in such a situation the justification is not on pay-back good but return on investment.

'As long as the new technology is attractive, they will adopt it. It's a question of its cost on its benefit. It guarantees the future viability of the business and allows them to adopt the justification that is needed for adoption.'

He believes at the heart of the problem is that 'industry is in the last years of the 20th century, and they can't see beyond their next balance sheet - they're not interested in the long term future.'

Other reasons include a lack of conviction in many industries that technology is necessary, and a prevalent Australian suspicion of trying anything new.

'Mr. Adams says, 'In Australia, and again in Australian industry, things done in a traditional way which fail to make the grade have been viewed much more sympathetically than new initiatives that didn't work.'

'People are constantly looking for fault in new proposals.'

The approach of 'Gee, you have some trouble getting that new thing going', is central to the problem.'

The Robotics Centre's next round of industry familiarisation courses will be held in November, beginning with the inaugural introductory afternoon on Tuesday 26 November. That will be followed by an introduction to robotics short course, and a hands-on robot programming workshop on 26 November.

The seminars will be repeated three times a year, Mr. Adams says.
Two-tier course shows how the system has evolved: VPSEC head

Concern was expressed at the meeting about Dr Allen's announcement that chairperson had been made to the original plan of Chisholm conferring the Award for the course. The original proposal was that both the Associate Diploma, taught wholly at the TAFE Colleges, would, like the degree, be a Chisholm award.

Dr Allen stressed the need for continuing the program, both internally and externally.

He suggested that the Commonwealth Tertiary Education Commission (CTEC) be approached for funding to undertake an external evaluation which was necessary 'precisely because it is external'.

The Associate diploma will be subject to accreditation by the TAFE Accreditation Board, and by the Accreditation Board in the state that the first year of the Associate diploma will represent the first year of the Chisholm degree.

Dr Allen said the Chairman of the TAFE Accreditation Board had agreed there should be close liaison between the two bodies during the accreditation process.

Academic staff representative on Council, Mr Tim Haslett, told the meeting about the move: 'We have done our all as a School. Now the two-tier course is necessary to support the program."

He believed the 'rules have already been broken', and added that the biggest problem will be the first year on the industrial front there will be still more problems to be overcome. In particular, the Council of Academic Staff Associations (CAS) was very concerned about the handover by Chisholm of the teaching of the first year of the degree course to TAFE.

It was 'still a can of worms with the potential for explosion' in the industrial relations sense, Mr Crook said. He added that the view that Chisholm was 'at the leading edge' of this type of development in Australia was misleading because similar arrangements already existed elsewhere.

Council president, Mr Olive Coop y, responded that the Chisholm/Holmesglen/ Frankston proposal was the only one brought before the Accreditation Board.

Mr Bill Walker told Council similar schemes had been operating in the USA for 50 years.

Although he could foresee industrial problems associated with the introduction of such courses, 'it's inevitable that the ladder will be set up where students can come in either from TAFE or advanced education.'

Australia will be looking to us as the model that's made it possible for the system to change,' he said.

A leading contemporary artist in this State, his focus was on themes drawn from his interest in Chisholm. He had expressed his work in a series of paintings and drawings of carousel horses.

An exhibition at the Quentin Gallery in Richmond during the same period application by the Library, about the history and development relating to Technology to Information' It is seeking information on the sorts of problems hearing impaired students face in their studies, with the objective of publishing a guide booklet for hearing impaired students.

For more information, contact Mr Schauder (ext 2157) or Mr Houghton (ext 345 Frankston) for more information.
Leader of the State Opposition, Mr Jeff Kennett, took time out to visit Chisholm recently for an address to the Chisholm Liberal Students group. Mr Kennett is pictured with the President of the group, student, Mark Topy.

Substantial progress has been made by the Task Force on the Recruitment of Overseas Students, with a draft report due for approval in the near future. The Task Force was set up earlier this year to examine the opportunities for Chisholm to market its educational programs overseas.

Convenor, Dr. Bill Briggs, says at this stage the earliest a pilot program could be introduced for private overseas students is second semester 1986.

The investigation was undertaken in response to Federal Government guidelines for tertiary institutions wishing to offer courses to overseas students. The guidelines do not apply to private universities but do require each institution to have a policy for international students.

The Task Force's findings indicate that the University has the capacity to host and market its programs overseas. Government officials have supported the Task Force's recommendations and are exploring the possibility of establishing a pilot program.

The main recommendations made by the Task Force are:
1. Increasing marketing and promotion efforts.
2. Developing a comprehensive program for international students.
3. Establishing a dedicated office to coordinate the program.
4. Collaborating with other universities and education agents.
5. Providing additional support services for international students.

One stop services

Chisholm's Community Services is now firmly established at the Caulfield Plaza.

The move, completed in the first three months of the year, brought all services under the one roof for the first time.

Weekly Benefits Under WorkCare

Weekly benefits under WorkCare are related to your loss of earnings.

If you are injured at work, your weekly benefit will be calculated as 60% of your ordinary time weekly earnings may be paid.

Weekly benefits may be paid for up to 52 weeks or 85% of their income depending on whether they have been totally or partially disabled.

Unable to Work

If you are injured and are unable to return to work owing to your incapacity, you will receive the weekly benefit paid.

Unemployed, your weekly benefit will be calculated as 80% of your income during the 52 weeks prior to your injury, or 85% if your income has increased.

Compensation on Death

If a worker dies as a result of a work injury, compensation is paid to the worker's dependants.

Compensation is paid for physical or mental impairment.

Making a Claim

After notifying your employer of your injury, you must make a claim simply by lodging a claim form with your employer.

The form is provided by the Commissioner of Voluntary Superannuation and Compensation. You must provide a current certificate of incapacity.

Benefits can continue to be paid until retirement age or the age at which a Commonwealth pension may come into force.

Medical Costs

All medical and legal costs are paid by the Commonwealth. Workers will retain any benefits they receive.

Compensation is paid only if it is found that there is a likelihood of death due to the injury.

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