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A STUDY OF THE FUNDING OF TERTIARY EDUCATION IN AUSTRALIA

1974-1980

by

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ABSTRACT

In 1974 the Federal Government abolished tuition fees for all government institutions and took over full funding responsibility for universities and colleges of advanced education from the States. This study investigates the process of funding tertiary institutions and the somewhat different position and importance in the funding process of technical and further education colleges compared with universities and colleges of advanced education is clarified and explained.

The influence of the changing economic circumstances of the late nineteen seventies upon the level and method of funding is considered. The role of the Tertiary Education Commission as a major influence within the funding process and its role in decisionmaking is outlined and its power acknowledged.

The Federal Government attitude to the level and pattern of funding tertiary education has altered significantly since 1974. To illustrate the extent and nature of changed government priorities, trends in funding and the implications of such trends are examined and analysed. From this data emerging problems as universities and colleges of advanced education face the difficulties of expenditure restraint are identified. It is noted that not all the effects of restraint have negative consequences, in fact there may be some positive benefits to be derived.

The field study investigates the currently increasing demands for our tertiary institutions to be more accountable for the public funds they spend. Questions associated with the demand

for accountability- the difficulty of defining what is meant by accountability; accountability for what, to whom, when, how and why in relation to the funding of tertiary education are discussed, associated problems and possible solutions highlighted.

Finally, some reflections upon the process of funding tertiary education are expounded and conclusions are drawn from the investigation undertaken and data presented.

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