

**A selection of key comments taken from more than 600 written contributions to the
GetUp campaign proposal forum:
'Reversing the govt's decision to abolish the Australian Learning and
Teaching Council'**

1980 votes were received for this proposal within 10 days of the announcement of the government's decision to abolish the ALTC.

<http://suggest.getup.org.au/forums/60819-campaign-ideas/suggestions/1416367-reversing-the-govt-s-decision-to-abolish-the-austr>

Why read this document?

This collection of selected quotes from the above forum is intended to help you understand the remarkable sense of betrayal at the decision to abolish the ALTC felt by academic staff and students. Each of these individuals has taken the time to articulate their genuine concerns about the impact this cut will have on the quality of the learning experience in Australian universities. Please read them. The voices here are those of professors, students, lecturers, academic developers, ALTC fellows and award winners and other voters.

Our goal is to seek reversal of a short term decision which will have long term negative consequences.

The following quotes are grouped under headings that relate to their general content.

Adrian Lee and Peter Goodyear
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Why the ALTC should not be abolished

"Numerous reports document the need for a workforce that can think well, communicate effectively, solve new and old problems, and fuel the economy in the knowledge sector. ALTC promotes the highest standards and best practices for higher education. "

"I support most of the arguments on this site and oppose the abolition. I declare an interest: I've received a grant from the ALTC. However, I think that the project we made with that grant (i) could not have happened without it and (ii) is worth the money. So I'm thinking of the many worthy projects that would be abolished with the ALTC and hoping that the government reverses this decision."

"The Government states that it wants to "transform the scale, potential and quality of the nation's universities". Abolishing the one organisation that has been instrumental in improving the learning and teaching in the "nation's universities" is certainly not the most logical way to bring about this transformation."

"The ALTC has made a significant difference to teaching practice across the sector. We can't afford to lose this now especially with the Govt push to increasing participation in higher education as described in the Bradley review."

"ALTC is respected internationally for its championing of evidence-based, innovative, high quality student learning in higher education. To close it would be to the detriment of graduates of Australian universities in terms of their capacity for lifelong learning and contribution to society."

"ditto to all comments so far... in addition a major loss will be the substantial collaboration BETWEEN universities that has been fostered by ALTC grants - collaborations for innovation and implementation in learning and teaching are as important and exciting as other research collaborations - ALTC collaborative grants have underpinned major change in many universities - if this decision cannot be reversed, what will be put in place to continue this scholarly community?"

"In enhancing the quality of research and practice around curriculum reform, in improving the quality of graduate outcomes, in promoting and recognising excellence in learning and teaching, and in contributing to the development of higher education standards, the ALTC is the envy of many countries around the world. Already, with significant advances made, to abolish the ALTC at this critical point in time will leave much of the world-leading research and outcomes unimplemented and unrealised in Australia's third largest export."

"Like many other commentators I'd gladly pay a flood levy. Funding that in part by closing the ALTC is an act without logic. It begs the inference that the government believes it is electorally safer to make it more difficult for Universities to operate effectively (by removing a structure that has allowed them to develop their learning and teaching) than it would be if it asked the Australian public to adequately fund flood relief and reconstruction, two beliefs that show a remarkable degree of cynicism."

"I was involved in an ALTC funded project on graduate capabilities which has now fed in to the ALTC being used to help develop the standards agenda that the Government is so keen on. Is the Government abandoning this policy at the same time? The ALTC is doing terrific work in improving higher education policy and practice and in encouraging improvement in teaching standards across the nation. It is one of the few bodies which specifically recognises teaching as opposed"

"Political expediency aside, a very poor decision reflecting little evaluation based on what's important for students or cost to benefit ratio. The cost to innovation and enhancement of university teaching and the student experience will be very significant; the benefit of \$88m in the scheme of the Government's budget appears to be very small"

"Having just spent the last couple of months redesigning a tutor skills development program, I am so impressed by the quality and variety of excellent materials which have been made possible through ALTC grants over the years. These grants make making teaching better possible and also give early career researchers opportunities to be involved in a research pathway. Please reconsider when the country is performing better than many others in world terms and ongoing education research is vital to produce the knowledge nation that we require to develop alternatives to mining and coal exports. "

"As someone with a very high teaching load in a smaller university, it is very disappointing to see that a national body that actually championed teaching is to be dismantled. In light of the expected influx of under-prepared and probably very anxious and needful students (many from the very places affected) in 2012 Bradley era, this seems exceedingly short-sighted... who will be encouraged to spend time caring for and planning for these students, not to mention spending time with them, when teaching is (again) the first to be jettisoned in a crunch? And really, without good teaching at UG level, where do people think the "well-prepared" PG students will come from?"

"The recommendations for greater social inclusion made for Higher Education by the Bradley Review, which have been endorsed by the Federal Government, will be near impossible to achieve without the support provided by the ALTC.

In addition, Higher Education in Australia is already desperately under-funded, and the status of 'teaching' seems to sink lower each year when compared with the status of 'research'. The ALTC is the one remaining agency that recognises, rewards and supports quality teaching. What are we to think of the status granted to teaching by this government, and by the community more broadly if this proposal goes uncontested? This is an extremely short-sighted move, and the waves of resentment are likely to ripple far and wide ."

"The impact of the ALTC's various learning and teaching grant programs and awards has touched every university in Australia. Literally thousands of university students are currently benefitting from the innovative, exciting and engaging learning activities made possible through ALTC support. The work our tertiary teachers and support staff are involved in is the envy of countries and universities around the world. Recognise and celebrate this achievement. Don't discard it like yesterday's fish n' chips. Providing our children and subsequent generations with excellent higher education experiences is the key to our prosperity and humanity. We cannot afford to turn our backs on it and we must not get confused with assuming the conducting compliance and quality audits stimulate excellence in education."

"The introduction of the ALTC has significantly changed university culture in that high quality and innovative teaching and learning has been valued almost as much as research. Students and staff have clearly benefitted from this shift in culture. However, once the funding disappears, universities will have to shift back to the 'research rules' approach, because that is where they will be able to get much needed money to fulfil their mission. Abolition of the ALTC will therefore be disastrous for quality learning and teaching in Australia."

"We waited so long to get any progress, and now, with the stroke of a pen, or so it seems, we will lose recognition of the importance of teaching and regress back to the "research rules" days. A more appropriate metaphor might be that "the reset button will be pressed". My observation is that many universities still only give perfunctory "lip service" to the importance of teaching, while simultaneously deriving the vast bulk of their operating revenues from student fees. The clear implication here is that research experts will inevitably be good at teaching and there is no need to spend significant amounts of time in refining and improving teaching materials and methods/strategies. There is much "research" evidence to deny this tacit claim."

"For a relatively small cost, the ALTC provides a crucial service to academics and students in focussing on what matters most to the knowledge economy- the quality of teaching and learning in universities and schools. As John Ralston Saul so eloquently said: "the wilful undermining of universal public education by our governments is the most flagrant betrayal of the basic principles of middle-class representative democracy on the past 50 years..."

"The health and sustainability of our social future is just as important as is our natural/environmental future. Increase the one off levy but keep the programs that have already been created for the future of our culture. It might be time to re-read the chapter on education in *Small is Beautiful; Economics As If People Mattered* which is a collection of essays by British economist E. F. Schumacher."

"Obama's 2011 state of the union address recognises that reinvigorating education is absolutely essential for the future prosperity of the US. Through the ALTC, the federal government has supported a national approach to reinvigorating higher education in Australia by bringing the best minds together to bear on issues such as: readying and supporting students from low SES backgrounds to study successfully at university, and; how to link teaching and research to prepare the next generation of innovators so they are able to compete with the best in the world. Abolishing the ALTC puts much at risk."

"The quality of teaching and learning in higher education is critical to the future of the nation as we SkillUp generation after generation to take custody of the nation's many assets. I have been up to my knees in the mud of the Queensland floods assisting the personal recovery of my sister. The news that we would compromise the future of teaching and learning quality in our higher education sector in the name of recovery is, at best, offensive to me and many others who have aided the clean-up and, at worst, a poorly targeted measure to add what really is diddly-squat to the \$5.6billion needed to fund repair. Why?"

What the ALTC has achieved

"The ALTC has been a major driver and facilitator of improvement in university teaching and learning. By identifying areas for improvement, by creating an evidence base for best practice, for bringing together people from across universities (who in other contexts are competing with one another), by funding research into curriculum and teaching practice and by requiring effective dissemination of all their funded projects and initiatives, the ALTC has been responsible for real improvement in teaching and learning practice."

"Educational research and encouragement to aspire to and share best practices in teaching are essential to the advancement of society. The ALTC was getting Australia somewhere."

"The impact that the ALTC has had at the coal-face - in developing quality teaching and learning in Universities - has been dramatic in recent years and, in my view, has been one of the key drivers of change in Universities during the past five years. A particular highlight has been the way in which the ALTC has fostered collaborative learning and teaching ventures and research between universities and provided leadership in the development of agreed-upon national academic standards for degree programs in a wide range of disciplines."

"The ALTC one of the few federally funded bodies that actually does real work in the area of tertiary education teaching standards and delivery. It is not a big or expensive organization, its annual budget is a lot less than what was just spent (by the ARC and individual universities) on the ERA exercise that has only ended up producing a league table. (This is no sour grapes, my discipline cluster received a 5 for our research output)."

"ALTC has consistently shown itself to be among the best-run, most efficient and effective government-funded organisations related to higher education. Abolishing the ALTC, by a former minister for education now prime minister, is not smart thinking."

"The ALTC has invigorated teaching and learning in higher education at the national level and stimulated significant research and collaboration between Australian academics which focuses on improving the quality of the student experience at all levels. If the government goes ahead with its decision to dismantle ALTC, it will have long term repercussions on tertiary education in this country"

"The ALTC has raised the profile of learning and teaching across the sector and has been an effective vehicle for discipline- wide and interdisciplinary collaboration that has brought benefits to students, academic staff and the institutions"

"The ALTC, which supported and rewarded excellence in teaching and provided the incentive to go beyond the realms to be innovative and produce programs to not only educate, but prepare students for the university journey and the 'World of Work' ahead. Thousands of university staff committed to excellent teaching were able to be funded to experiment with innovative ways to best teach students. Student learning has changed dramatically and is in need of constant changes to ensure effective and up-to-date teaching. It seems education is no longer a priority. Teaching has been a second priority to research. Up until the ALTC we were faced with the challenge of either providing an excellent learning experience for our students or put all their efforts into research."

"As a university academic for the past 35 years I've seen the HE system progressively change its view of itself from that of being the means of developing the best minds in the community for the purpose of professional service to that community, towards one of funded research at any cost. The ALTC was Australia's nationally recognised bulwark against rampant devaluation of teaching quality. "

"Until the past decade, the history of national government support for teaching and learning in higher education in Australia had been a series of stop-start counter-productive 'projects'. The continuity and professionalism of the ALTC was experienced by hundreds of academics as appropriate recognition and support of their work. Particularly for those of us working in regional Australia, we have been afforded many opportunities to participate and contribute to important national initiatives to improve the quality of all our graduates. This reckless decision to abandon national support now is extraordinarily short-sighted and mean."

"Teaching quality has improved a lot with the inception of ALTC. Many universities are now recognising good teachers, and students are benefiting from a number of Teaching and Learning Projects. If the government goes ahead with its decision of abolishing ALTC, we will go backward and will "kill" teaching and learning innovations."

"The ALTC is one of the great success stories of Australian tertiary education that has been innovative in its support and rewards for excellence in teaching. The output of the ALTC has been extremely valuable to Australia and has allowed Australian learning and teaching innovations to excel on an international scale. Abolishing the ALTC will have a negative impact on Australia's future."

" The one thing I can try to articulate more than anything else is how ALTC provided an excellent pathway for academic and non-academic staff to engage in projects and research that underpinned their core practice - teaching and learning. To ignore such a fundamental aspect of higher education by removing an integral national network (with an international reputation) that supports this is extremely short-sighted in my view."

"The ALTC has made an important contribution to improving the quality of teaching and learning across Australian higher education. There is no doubt that students' learning experiences and outcomes have been enhanced through its work. In view of government concerns with the future skills shortage and the shortfall of future members of the university workforce, the proposal to close the ALTC is beyond belief."

"Closing the ALTC is a very short-sighted decision for the Australian Government. The ALTC has provided for the last 5 years a single-unifying body under which universities can establish their own teaching & learning initiatives. You only need to look at how many universities have created or tied their T&L awards and grants to the ALTC to realise this is the case. To remove the ALTC is to take the country backwards in teaching & learning, a clear sign that the government has no clear perspective on Education at all."

"The ALTC has played a critical role in raising the profile of learning and teaching in higher education, in building understanding of student learning and in providing a mechanism for academics to communicate and share their ideas and practice. Its programs, grants and awards have now become key parts of institutional life and are highly regarded and valued by academics and leaders alike. It would be a tragedy to lose the innovations and the projects having arisen from ALTC initiatives at a time when they are beginning to show real impact on the sector. Worse, removing funding sends a very negative message about the importance of teaching and learning – aren't we supposed to be engaged in an 'education revolution'? Reverse the decision!"

Why TESQA cannot replace the ALTC's quality enhancement role

"I'm wondering at the sense of having a body like TEQSA in existence while a body like ALTC is not. Increasing measures for accountability and an enhanced focus on standards should be balanced by the support structures needed to develop those things. Well ... so I thought."

"The demanded increase in higher education participation to maintain and enhance Australia's attractiveness necessitates a continuously enhanced higher education sector. Unfortunately, an enhanced higher education sector only occurs through strategic, planned and supported innovation, dissemination and uptake. The ALTC has been the core organisation to make this happen, across the country. Abolishing the ALTC, and replacing it with a quality measure system will emphasise exceeding current minimum standards, rather than pushing for the best possible Australia. "

"This is a bad decision. It will undermine the quality of university teaching just as "Bradley's children" begin to arrive in significant numbers. TEQSA is a regulatory body: it's not designed to provide professional development and conduct research into teaching & learning. Abolishing the ALTC will also damage morale and make an academic career far less attractive."

"I have just read that Prime Minister Gillard claims that the ALTC can be axed with no loss to the higher education community, as TEQSA will fill the gap. I was under the impression that TEQSA was involved in measuring quality, not in providing programs and initiatives to improve quality."

"Comments by the government that T&L quality objectives can be achieved solely through the new TESQA are very problematic and suggest to me that there are a number of people in the bureaucracy who do not really understand what makes universities tick. A decision to abolish the ALTC will have far reaching consequences that go well beyond simply recognising innovative practice and supporting the scholarship of teaching and learning."

"One wonders how the government can on the one hand promote a strategy of performance enhancement in teaching and learning and on the other withdraw support for the ALTC which has been at the heart of the performance enhancement of Australian higher education. To say this is about money is a shabby excuse which can hardly be the case with such small amounts"

"A very poor decision to stop funding the ALTC. They provide a much needed centre for a community committed to improving teaching and learning across the sector. Without ALTC we could be left with a TEQSA led managerial approach that believes measuring teaching quality will lead to improvements. Well it won't unless there is input into solving the issues that were the cause of lack of high quality teaching in the first place.
Cathryn"

"The ALTC is one of the government's quality initiatives in university teaching and learning, yet it is the only one that is focused on quality enhancement. The initiatives cited as 'covering' quality are TEQSA, My University website, student satisfaction (UES) surveys and tests of learning (CLA). These are not quality enhancement initiatives but quality assurance. The one enhancement initiative is to be cut. Why not delay the introduction of TEQSA, UES or CLA instead of taking the one initiative that is highly valued by all in the university sector as actually delivering on improvement and enhanced quality?"

"It is a sheer waste to abolish an entity that is progressing the quality of higher education in Australia. ALTC is essential for complementing the work of TESQA. The decision to abolish ALTC is simply incomprehensible."

International recognition of ALTC that will be lost - to Australia's detriment

"From the perspective of an academic in the UK and a National Teaching Fellow I feel that the ATLC has been a leader internationally in driving forward an agenda for improvements in teaching in higher education. Across the world Australia is viewed as a beacon for innovation in teaching in higher education and this is due in no small measure to the work of the ATLC"

"Work with Australian colleagues in receipt of ALTC funding has led to international collaboration around teaching quality in psychology within Higher Education. It is therefore extremely disappointing to hear that the ALTC may be abolished. Short term savings in funding risk the loss of communities of practice which are often impossible or very expensive to rebuild."

"I've been telling international colleagues how valuable (and cost effective) the ALTC has been in supporting educational initiatives that go across disciplines and institutions, and address key issues for higher education learning & teaching. . Now we run the risk of heading back to the pack, with profound negative impact on the quality of higher education. Isn't education one of our biggest export earners?"

"Apart from the domestic quality issues, as the economic attractiveness to international students of Australian HE diminishes (due to unfavourable exchange rates, economic problems in source countries etc), the quality of Australian education and the student experience are things we can really use to differentiate our universities and continue to promote them as attractive destinations for study in comparison to our competitors. SO WHY is this government destroying one of the key funding bodies and coordinators of development in learning and teaching? MADNESS!"

"It will be a disaster to close the ALTC. Australia has led the way internationally in promoting excellence in teaching and learning and the UK has learnt much from your practices. Please reverse this decision. I write as someone who is a frequent visitor downunder and who has seen first hand the benefits ALTC has reaped in raising the status of teaching and the quality of student learning. I have been an international advisor or evaluator on several ALTC projects and have been greatly impressed by the quality of the work that ALTC has facilitated and supported."

"As a Senior Fellow of the Higher Education Academy in the UK I can only say that I am appalled at this non-sensical decision. At a time when the world faces one of the most severe financial challenges ever, climate changes threats mankind in different ways and lack of resources begin to affect our life styles we turn for solutions to our governments, research organisations and education institutions. At Higher Education Institutions we have the academic capabilities to develop ideas and generate solutions through our research and learning"

"I share the dismay of other colleagues at this decision. As a Senior Fellow of the Higher Education Academy UK I am privileged to know something of the positive impact such Councils can and do make to the quality of teaching and learning, and to the international cross fertilisation of best practice"

"ALTC is very I respected in the UK and the importance of outstanding and innovative university learning and teaching is increasingly important internationally. The ineptness of this decision viewed from the UK is breathtaking. It is equivalent to abolishing the Australian Tourist Board and shooting Shane Warne into the bargain. We may be competitors for international students but their is no pleasure in watching Australia shoot itself in the foot."

"Australian tertiary education has benefited from ALTC's support of education research and innovation. The reputation of Australian universities and the education sector has never been higher. Now, we now join the few developed countries without centralised support of tertiary education research and innovation. It is hard to believe that a government would sacrifice the future of tertiary education which is the foundation for development of the country."

"Many of us in the UK have looked with admiration, and some envy, at the effectiveness and efficiency of the ALTC in supporting development and innovation in learning and teaching in Australian universities. This seems an appallingly barbaric and short-sighted decision. Good luck to all of you campaigning to reverse it."

"Here in the USA, we look to advancements in Australia through ALTC as an excellent example of a constructive way to enhance student learning and promote equity in higher education. Please reconsider your decision. The long-term consequences for the Australian people and the Australian economy are considerable."

"We in the UK have been looking enviously at Australia. During a time when HE in the UK is being decimated by cuts, Australia's govt had the foresight to invest in its HE provision. So I am completely at a loss as to why they would cut the ALTC. Whilst I appreciate it won't have reached everyone - these things never do, there is no doubt that the work it has done has benefitted students and HE in general. The one thing that is surviving our cuts is the Higher Education Academy because we all appreciate the need for a lead on promoting professional standards and supporting innovation in learning and teaching. I am so sorry that this is happening and I hope the govt. think again."

Impact on students and staff

" Way to knee tertiary teacher in the groin, ALP. When you think that a single university lecturer has the potential to impact hundreds of students per year, the potential ramifications of this short-sighted decision are enormous. "

" At a time when the Government wants an 'Education Revolution' that will expand university participation in the 18-25 and low socio-economic groups, we have this decision that abolishes the one organisation that told academics that teaching matters. Why bust yourself over teaching if, unlike in research, there is no national peer recognition system that lets you affirm your innovation and excellence to a promotions committee. This will have a seriously negative effect on university teaching out of all proportion to the money saved. "

" ditto to all comments so far... in addition a major loss will be the substantial collaboration BETWEEN universities that has been fostered by ALTC grants - collaborations for innovation and implementation in learning and teaching are as important and exciting as other research collaborations - ALTC collaborative grants have underpinned major change in many universities - if this decision cannot be reversed, what will be put in place to continue this scholarly community? "

" I also thought that the eternal claim that "teaching is less important to your promotion prospects than your research" *was* gradually being eroded by the work of the ALTC. What now? I ask. I can't think of a clearer signal that teaching does not matter after all. "

" When you remove avenues for recognition and innovation with utter disregard for any consultation with the sector, you severely damage the morale of colleagues who invest 'heart and soul' in support of learning; restrict exploration of solutions to current sector problems, and in simple terms convey to those considering a tertiary education that 'students don't matter'. If they did, we would value wonderful educators. "

" What has impressed me most about ALTC Citation and National Teaching Award winners has been their delight in being recognised for their excellent work with students and their willingness to share aspects of their good practice with anyone who asks. How short-sighted to waste that skill and generosity! "

" With upward of 80% of the meagre \$22M funding for ALTC going directly to support those with ALTC funding awards, this cut is a direct kick in the guts for those most committed to teaching and learning innovation in the higher education. "

" I agree this is very much a backward step. Those of us who do many hours of teaching, trying to make university a place that students actually enjoy being at, rather than tolerating in order to get a degree and job, once again have been shown that we are not of great value "in the scheme of things". In fact most of us are contributing to both excellent teaching and research. I can make much better money in my clinical field than in teaching at university, however, I have chosen to stay in the academic world as I enjoy teaching. The recognition by ALTC is the icing on the cake, and does allow me to use the funds I have received through this organisation, to enhance my teaching and therefore the quality of the university experience of students. "

" What message does this send to tertiary academics and to the community at large, including hundreds of thousands of fee-paying students? The message is clear: "government and university administration messages regarding the importance of teaching are but empty words", and are worse than useless. It would be better if they were honest and simply said to the academics "just go for research outputs and do as little as you can get by with in your teaching efforts". At least that would be the truth, which seems to be getting rarer by the day. "

" Good teachers are costly, but bad teachers cost more. ~Bob Talbert The ALTC is fundamental in the development of not only the good teachers, but the great teachers of our nation. As a student I know and have experienced first hand the damage poor teaching can have on an education. Think about your decisions Julia - the students are the future of this nation don't jeopardize them by laying them in the hands of poor uninspiring teachers. "

" Two years ago, the then Education Minister, the Hon. Julia Gillard presented me with an ALTC Award for Teaching Excellence - Early Career. Thrilling! Recognition for Teaching and Learning in an Australian University! But how can an early career in higher education, student engagement, teaching be continued in the absence of a National teaching and learning body encouraging excellence, innovation and collaboration? What message does the closure of the ALTC send to my newer academic colleagues as to the importance of teaching and learning in higher education? The ALTC is imperative for the recognition, support and collegiality of Australian Universities. The loss of the ALTC would have a negative impact far beyond the temporary savings to the budget its closure would otherwise secure. "

Message to the sector and electorate

" Abolishing the ALTC is a strong indication that the government puts very little value on improving the quality of teaching and learning in our universities - and no commitment to education in the short or long term. "

" Are the good tertiary teachers out there going to again have to go cap in hand to the masters and beg them to consider that what they do is valuable? I thought we were getting past that mouldy oldy. "

" There are very few funding opportunities for research projects that support collaborative inquiry across the Tertiary Sector. ALTC grants are focussed on quality improvement and knowledge development in the Higher Education sector. With a Prime Minister who states openly that she is passionate about education, it is hard to know why this decision has been made. "

" This decision sends an appalling message to all those who are committed to improving the quality of teaching in Australian universities and to ensuring that our courses, and our teaching, are world class. It sends an equally appalling message to those who are not so committed. It will cause Australia considerable embarrassment in international higher education circles. Surely a government committed to education will reverse this decision. "

" What does this decision say about the value this government places on higher education. In a time when Gillard is calling for an increase in LSES in 2012, she cuts the very program that has been developing (and would continue to develop) the teaching skills of academics to engage these students in university learning. There is no sense in the decision to scrap ALTC. "

Perception of Government priorities

" I would like to see the Government - any Government - take Higher Education seriously. We are looking at this sector declining in quality of teaching rapidly. The ALTC is as necessary as research output. Without well educated students - there will be no quality practitioners or researchers! "

" Clearly the Federal government still doesn't support high quality teaching and teaching development in the tertiary sector - very short sighted. By the time all the baby boomers retire, what on Earth will be left to attract good young teachers into our universities? More with less is NOT the way to go, but it's exactly what will happen if this plan goes ahead! "

" The Councils of Deans are deeply concerned that the ALTC has been axed without consultation with the higher education sector. As the leaders of faculties with more than 30,000 academics who teach most of the 1.3 million students in Australia's universities, we want to affirm the immensely significant role that the ALTC has come to play in higher education. "

" The Australian Government invests substantial funds in support of its research excellence systems, the ARC and NHMRC. The Government recognised the importance of supporting innovation and excellence in teaching and learning similarly, through the establishment of the ALTC. To cut this program sends a powerful signal to the contrary. "

" The status and quality of Higher education teaching and learning has benefitted greatly from the ALTC. The intention to abolish it says much about the low priority and recognition of L&T in this government's eyes. Student focused L&T though is the heart & soul of Higher Education; and students are the source of most of the funding for universities. As universities are now being required (by the same government wanting to abolish the ALTC) to teach a much larger contingent of students from diverse backgrounds quality L&T is of even greater import to the sector. "

" The ALTC has had an enormous positive impact on the scholarship of teaching and learning in Australia. Abolishing it would highlight the lack of value placed on teaching and learning in comparison with research and therefore be a step backwards. Abolishing this organisation makes as little sense as abolishing the NHMRC! "

" The dismantling of the ALTC is about to make an already difficult job even more difficult for those who are fighting to have teaching recognised as having any importance in institutions pre-occupied with research outputs. Given this government's apparent concern with raising the number of tertiary qualified Australians, taking away a body whose sole role is to promote and support excellent teaching and teaching development seems counter-productive. When the govt states that excellent teaching does not matter in such an emphatic way, how do those of us who support teaching and learning development argue that staff should give as much attention to their students as to their research? "

" Will the government also consider cutting the research funding to Australian universities for the same reason? Or is funding to improve the quality of University teaching less important than funding research? I doubt the majority of University staff, students & the Australian public would agree with such a priority in funding Australia's future. "

" This is very sad. Small institutions like the one i work in are already having a difficult time. ALTC projects provided a way to initiate change that was impossible without an ALTC stimulus. Its also sad that teaching and learning in Higher Education is worth so little. "

" This decision reflects a lack of understanding about the value of the ALTC and the importance of teaching and learning in higher education. To say that this is a low priority is offensive and misinformed. To suggest that TEQSA will pick up the pieces underestimates the work done by the ALTC. I hope the decision isn't based on any accurate estimate of how Australians value education. "

How does this decision reflect on Gillard government leadership?

" Sometimes the most important thing to do is admit a hasty decision, and re-consider in the light of growing awareness of consequences. I hope such leadership and maturity is possible. "

" A sad move by an education 'revolution' government with an education 'champion' for a PM. This removes the one body dedicated to strategic leadership and funding in L&T. It will simply mean innovation replaced by regulation, inspiration replaced with more bureaucratisation. The govt obviously thinks that the big stick held by TESQA will be a way to enforce high quality education. "

" Any excuse to abolish something good that came out of the previous government is just dumb politics. Why cause chaos in higher ed for the sake of poor sportsmanship? "

" This is a retrograde step for the government. Julia Gillard (in her role as minister for education) gave an excellent speech at the ALTC awards ceremony in Canberra in November 2009 extolling the virtues of the ALTC. It would probably take 15 years to rebuild the excellent work done by the ALTC, not to mention the corporate knowlege that would be lost. Please don't do this! Australia needs to move forward. "

" For an extra \$1 per person in Australia we could drastically increase the quality of tertiary education in this country. That is an amazing return on investment. I have been supportive of the Labor government for many years but this is leading me to severely question their priorities and wisdom. Be smart and reverse this decision! "

" Wayne Swan, in his address to the CEO institute (Queensland) on Friday, said:

"The coming Budget... will recognise education is the principle driver of prosperity in an economy that demands we draw more heavily on the talents and efforts of even more of our people.

I would strongly urge the government to reverse the decision to abolish ALTC. When I voted for this government it was to ensure the improvement of education, and the loss of the ALTC would severely impact on this. It supports teaching and learning and values excellent teachers rather than always research...one of the few organisations that does. "

" Why destroy this excellent organisation: the ALTC? Excellence in learning and teaching is what it is all about. Julia Gillard, you have championed excellent teaching in many of your speeches, so why kill off the best overall functional champion in this area? Please think again and reverse this decision. "

" Providing support and incentive to teachers to engage in innovative and scholarly work is ESSENTIAL to the future health and quality of the higher-education sector in Australia. I am Australian and currently work in HK. The contrast is amazing. When times get tough here in HK, the government puts MORE funding into education as a strategy to support community morale and economic growth. The Australian government needs to look around the world to see how education is valued and supported elsewhere. "

" I am struggling to find words to describe the destruction of an organisation that has achieved so much and has come to play such a central role in Australian higher education. For a Government that claims to have made education its highest priority, this decision is bewildering and extremely short-sighted. It is going to be an interesting test of the resilience of the Australian higher education community. "

" the Government needs to take a long hard look at their Education priorities for Australia. We voted them in on the basis they supported tertiary education --- now this is a stab in the back. The ALTC have been exemplary in promoting Teaching and Learning Excellence -- not only for the dissemination of research funding, but with individual teaching recognition within the Tertiary sector. Please reconsider Julia or you will jeopardise voter support in the next election. "

" I wonder if the government has considered the effect of reducing supportive services for strategic learning and teaching improvements on the young (student) vote. The government is quite happy to claim the Higher Education sector as the third biggest export earner, until it comes to ensuring students have a quality educational service. What a short sighted strategy. Lets find more strategic ways to support those in need"

" How incredibly short sighted and politically expedient to throw away all the wonderful work in quality learning and teaching that the ALTC has fostered in it's relatively short life thus far. A vision for a dynamic Australia future and economy obviously does not exist in this government. The widening participation agenda, alongside the abandonment of quality teaching and learning scholarship, spells disaster for the long term future and international competitiveness of Australia's higher education sector and therefore the country! "

" The ALTC was a real move towards taking seriously education and research into teaching in the Higher Education sector. As more Australians enter our universities, so we need teachers and programs that serve them well. We cannot afford to fail our students. To do so is to fail Australia and Australians and, coupled with cuts on environmental programs, this latest attack on education calls into question Julia Gillard's capacity to govern responsibly. "

" For a Prime Minister who says she values education so highly this is a deeply disappointing decision. The ALTC was doing a great deal to help strike a balance between education and research at universities; this balance will now be much harder to achieve. "

" Very short sighted Julia! You've lost my vote. The impact of ALTC is finally being felt in institutions and with the vast increase in numbers of students both this year and next all we'll see is teaching being downgraded once again. Clearly your advisors have no knowledge of higher education. "