

# HE community fights ALTC closure

*31 Jan 11 by John Ross | [Print this story](#) | [Send this story to a friend](#)*

**While universities stand to lose more than twice as much from cuts to capital funding, it's the abolition of the ALTC that really has the higher education community up in arms.**

The higher education community has mounted a rearguard action the looming closure of the Australian Learning and Teaching Council (ALTC), protesting through official channels and launching a social media campaign.

An acting vice-chancellor vowed to have the “axing” overturned, claiming support from seven other universities, while the Innovative Research Universities group also criticised the government’s decision to close the ALTC at the end of the year to free up funds for flood reconstruction.

Meanwhile a GetUp campaign launched last Thursday - the day the government announced its decision - had attracted over 300 comments by the time *Campus Review* went to press on Monday morning.

The Australian Association for Research in Education (AARE) issued an old fashioned call to arms, asking members to fight the decision through the media, their local MPs and university campaigns as well as contributing to the GetUp campaign.

The AARE executive said that while it recognised the need to rebuild flood-affected infrastructure, the decision was misguided. “It will save the government only \$22 million per year, killing off some very worthwhile activity and transferring costs to universities.

“The decision to make these cuts will need support in Parliament if it is to proceed. There is likely to be heated debate about some of the other proposed cuts and we want to ensure that the ALTC decision does not go uncontested.”

The GetUp campaign instigator Peter Goodyear said the ALTC championed a collective approach to improving the quality of university education. “This is a necessary step in opening up higher ed to everyone who can benefit from it. Abolishing the ALTC is short-sighted and will undermine Australian HE’s contribution to equity and excellence.”

Many respondents accused the government of “short-termism”, while expressing sympathy for the flood-affected. “We have already contributed personally through donation, and we are all willing to contribute further through the increased tax levy,” said one.

“However, purposefully diminishing our future human resource infrastructure indirectly but significantly by abolishing the ALTC is so short-sighted, for a supposedly well-educated government, that it is beyond belief.”

The director of the National Centre for Student Equity in Higher Education, Professor Trevor Gale, wrote that the government had “shot its equity and expansion agenda in the foot”.

“At base, the agenda is about rethinking HE itself. To attract more students, HE needs to be relevant to groups not traditionally well represented. New kinds of students in HE will require a new engagement with them. The government’s ambitious agenda needs an ALTC to direct and fund this reconceptualisation.

“The best that TEQSA will be able to do is monitor yesterday’s standards, which will fall short of what is needed. Eliminating the ALTC reduces the equity agenda to a numbers game at the points of entry and exit.

And the numbers just don't stack up.”

The campaign has already attracted input from as far afield as the US and UK. “We in the UK have been looking enviously at Australia - during a time when HE in the UK is being decimated, Australia’s government had the foresight to invest in its HE provision,” wrote Lesley-Jane Eales-Reynolds, who chairs the UK’s Association of National Teaching Fellows.

“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. So I am completely at a loss as to why they would cut the ALTC.”

Meanwhile the acting vice-chancellor of the University of Tasmania, Professor David Rich, condemned the move and said he would work to have it overturned. “The council has been a powerful force in the higher education sector, supporting high teaching and learning standards especially through its awards and grants office,” he said.

“The strength of its work has been in the collective nature of its activities. This cannot be done by individual institutions alone.”

The ALTC itself protested the decision, and issued a report analysing its impact to date. Go to [altc.edu.au](http://altc.edu.au)

Related stories

[Floods erode capital and teaching fund](#)

[Infrastructure funds float off as floods shift priorities](#)

#### COMMENT ON THIS STORY

#### CONTACT THE EDITOR

Name

Email address

Your comment

Submit

*Note: your email address will not be displayed*