

# TERTIARY CAMPUS MINISTRY ASSOCIATION (AUSTRALIA) Inc.

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## "TERTIARY CHAPLAINS EXPRESS OPPOSITION TO NELSON REPORT"

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The Tertiary Campus Ministry Association (Australia) Inc. [TCMA] held their national conference in Adelaide last week. The TCMA is the peak body for tertiary chaplains of all faiths in this country and has international links to similar bodies. They placed a high priority on their concern about the potentially detrimental nature of the recommendations coming out of the Nelson Report.

TCMA President, Rev Dr. Erich von Dietze said, "As members of the university community who are on the front-line of student services and also in close contact with staff, we are becoming increasingly concerned about the so-called reforms to higher education. Although we agree that tertiary education in Australia is in need of reform, we do not see the majority of the proposals in the Nelson Report doing anything other than making the current situation more difficult for many students."

As they met at Aquinas Residential College, overlooking the stunning vista of the Adelaide parklands, tertiary chaplains from all over the country expressed their apprehension about the state of higher education and the increasing stresses put on the staff and students for whom they care.

Dr von Dietze said, "We are seeing big changes in the way students and staff are managing in a system where outcomes are valued over the learning process, and students are increasingly seen as products rather than human beings."

"The most obvious backward step is the increased cost to the student. Higher HECS for most subjects, the increase in full fee paying places and an insignificant number of scholarships will mean that wealth rather than talent will increasingly play a role in determining who gets an education and which fields are studied. The chief beneficiary of higher education is society as a whole, and we will all suffer because some will not have the opportunity to develop their talents."

"Introducing an apparently inflexible five year limit on support for most degrees ignores issues that can affect some students such as illness, personal and family crises."

"We are also deeply concerned with the linking of increased funding for universities to industrial relations changes. The freedom to engage in enterprise bargaining, Union membership and industrial activity by tertiary education sector staff will be seriously restricted."

"The TCMA believe reform of the Tertiary Education sector is necessary. We do not believe that the proposed changes currently before the Parliament and the Australian people will create a stronger, wiser and better educated nation where all Australians can rejoice and be free, and have the opportunity to reach their full potential."

These concerns have been raised in a submission to the Senate Inquiry into Higher Education funding and regulatory legislation made by the TCMA following the national conference.

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For further comment please contact;

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