FLINDERS UNIVERSITY

VICE-CHANCELLOR’S REPORT TO COUNCIL

4(a) Federal Government’s Proposed Agenda

Since the Coalition was re-elected on 9 October, the Minister Dr Brendan Nelson has outlined a new agenda of change for higher education. The main areas are industrial relations, voluntary student unionism, a proposal that the Commonwealth take over all powers over universities from the States, changes to governance and the definition and regulation of universities, as described in the attached articles from the Australian (2 November 2004) (Doc C 122/04). There has been subsequent media attention given to the issue of teaching-only universities.

4(b) Voluntary Student Unionism

The General Secretary of the Students’ Association will report. A paper will be tabled (Doc C 123/04). A Policy Paper on Student Organisations adopted by the AVCC in 2998 is attached (Doc C 124/04).

4(c) New Private University in Adelaide

In late October the Premier announced that the South Australian government was in negotiations with Carnegie Mellon University in the USA over a possible new private fee-paying university to be set up in Adelaide. The intention would be to offer mainly postgraduate courses in computer science, business and public policy and administration to fee-paying Australian and international students. These areas were nominated as being areas in which Carnegie Mellon has specialist expertise. The draft Heads of Agreement that was presented to the South Australian Parliament is attached (Doc C 126/04) and a recent article in an international higher education journal (The Observatory Breaking News 17 November 2004) (Doc C 125/04). An item from the Carnegie Mellon website is attached (Doc C 127/04).

A feasibility study is being undertaken by staff from the Department of Premier and Cabinet, who have had one meeting with me.

4(d) Report on Plans for 2006 and Alumni Matters

Since the last Council meeting there has been considerable activity by the various committees that have responsibility for the management of the program of activities for the 40th Anniversary in 2006. There is now a joint management committee comprising both University people and Alumni and a small executive. The Steering Committee chaired by the Chancellor has also met and approved the plans that are being made.

Information on the program as it is developing has been communicated to all staff and to the newly established Alumni FACes group. A copy of the email sent to all staff is attached (Doc C 128/04). A budget is being determined for the 40th Anniversary.
4(e) **Innovative Research Universities Australia**

The IRU Australia group has been awarded its first competitive grant from the Higher Education Innovation Programme: $195,000 to establish an undergraduate student mobility program between the six universities in environmental sciences. In November a research workshop was held to explore collaborative activities in water research. In February the group will hold its first forum for senior staff from each of the six university members, with the objective of engaging Vice-Chancellors, Deputy and Pro-Vice-Chancellors, Deans and senior administrators in discussions about future collective activities to promote and enhance the members of the group.

Regular meetings have continued to occur between Vice-Chancellors, the various Deputy Vice-Chancellors, and the Librarians throughout the year. A newsletter is being produced every few months and a brochure about IRU Australia has been produced and is about to be widely distributed. (Copies will be provided to Council members as soon as it is available). As Convenor of the group, I have also issued several media releases and newspaper articles on the achievements of the group and topical issues. The latest of these is attached (Doc C 129/04).

4(f) **Melbourne Institute Ranking of Australian Universities**

The Melbourne Institute of Applied Economic and Social Research at the University of Melbourne has undertaken a study of the international standing of all Australian Universities, the results of which have been published in a paper entitled *The International Standing of Australian Universities* (24 November 2004). The paper is intended to provide a response to a perceived demand for information on the international standing of Australian universities from students, employers and academics to assist them to make decisions on where to study, whom to employ, or where to seek professional advice. The paper identifies a ranking system, under which Flinders University has been ranked 9th, immediately below the Group of Eight universities. The other IRU Australia Universities also ranked highly (LaTrobe 10th, Macquarie 11th, Newcastle 13th, Murdoch 14th, Griffith 16th).

The following six measures used to gauge international standing: the quality/international standing of staff (40% weighting); the quality of graduate programs (16%); the quality of undergraduate intake (11%) the quality of undergraduate programs (14%); an institution’s resource levels (11%); and a survey of overseas universities’ Chief Executive Officers and deans of Australian universities (8%). Under the sixth criterion, those surveyed were asked to rate each Australian university in comparison with foreign universities, and then weigh each of the six categories on importance. CEOs and deans placed the greatest emphasis on the quality/international standing of staff.
4(g) **Prime Minister’s Award for University Teacher of the Year 2004**

Each year since 1997 there are national awards for Australian University teachers in five discipline groupings, for Indigenous teacher and institutional awards in various categories. Flinders has been successful in each year since 2001. This year a Flinders academic, Professor Mark Israel from the School of Law, won the overall Prime Minister’s Award for University Teacher of the Year, as well as the award for his discipline group. The announcement of the Award in *The Australian* on 1 December and an article in On Campus about this award are attached (Doc C 131/04 and Doc C 132/04).

4(h) **Deirdre Jordan Village Award**

The Deirdre Jordan Student Village has been awarded a national prize by the Master Builders Association for design of a medium density development.

4(i) **Flinders Way**

The University has produced a new handbook for staff, with the name of *Flinders Way*. It contains a concise account of strategic planning and quality assurance at Flinders. As Council will be aware, we have been working on clarifying and streamlining a number of processes and providing a more readily understandable representation of what we do. This handbook presents this in a more readily understandable form and will be provided to every member of staff and to students’ associations, as well as to the members of Council and its committees, and others as appropriate. It is also part of the University’s preparation for its AUQA Audit in 2006. Copies are enclosed (Doc C 133/04).

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**Professor Anne R Edwards**

**Vice-Chancellor**

6 December 2004