

University of Wollongong

Research Online

Faculty of Law, Humanities and the Arts -
Papers (Archive)

Faculty of Arts, Social Sciences & Humanities

1-1-2012

Bullshit: an Australian perspective, or, what can an organisational change impact statement tell us about higher education in Australia?

Katherine Bode
Australian National University

Leigh Dale
University of Wollongong, ldale@uow.edu.au

Follow this and additional works at: <https://ro.uow.edu.au/lhapapers>



Part of the [Arts and Humanities Commons](#), and the [Law Commons](#)

Research Online is the open access institutional repository for the University of Wollongong. For further information contact the UOW Library: research-pubs@uow.edu.au

Bullshit: an Australian perspective, or, what can an organisational change impact statement tell us about higher education in Australia?

Abstract

In the last few years, a scholarly critique of current forms and directions of higher education has become increasingly prominent. This work, often but not exclusively focussed on the American and British systems, and on humanities disciplines, laments the transformation of the university into 'a fast-food outlet that sells only those ideas that its managers believe will sell [and] treats its employees as if they were too devious or stupid to be trusted' (Parker and Jary 335). Topics include the proliferation of courses and subject areas seen as profitable, particularly for overseas students;¹ the commensurate diminution or dissolution of 'unprofitable' areas; the de-professionalisation of academic staff and limitation of their powers in decision-making; the dismantling of academic disciplines and department-based academic units; the growing size and authority of management in determining priorities in research (see Laudel) and teaching; quantification and evaluation of academic work; and increasing dependence on these quantitative measures to define and assess academic productivity and efficiency, as well as the reputation of individuals, disciplines (Young et al.), and institutions (Levin; Jarwal et al.).² There are also, of course, advocates for these changes: promoters of 'excellence' in teaching (Lovegrove and Clarke; Walshe); 'quality assurance' (see essays with Shah as lead author; Sharrock); and the inclusion of humanities in the list of disciplines that can become entrepreneurial (Cunningham).

Keywords

statement, impact, change, organisational, can, perspective, australian, bullshit, higher, about, australia, us, education, tell

Disciplines

Arts and Humanities | Law

Publication Details

Bode, K. & Dale, L. (2012). Bullshit: an Australian perspective, or, what can an organisational change impact statement tell us about higher education in Australia?. *Australian Humanities Review*, 53 (November), 1-15.

'Bullshit'? An Australian Perspective; or, What can an Organisational Change Impact Statement tell us about Higher Education in Australia?

By Katherine Bode and Leigh Dale

© all rights reserved.

In the last few years, a scholarly critique of current forms and directions of higher education has become increasingly prominent. This work, often but not exclusively focussed on the American and British systems, and on humanities disciplines, laments the transformation of the university into 'a fast-food outlet that sells only those ideas that its managers believe will sell [and] treats its employees as if they were too devious or stupid to be trusted' (Parker and Jary 335). Topics include the proliferation of courses and subject areas seen as profitable, particularly for overseas students;¹ the commensurate diminution or dissolution of 'unprofitable' areas; the de-professionalisation of academic staff and limitation of their powers in decision-making; the dismantling of academic disciplines and department-based academic units; the growing size and authority of management in determining priorities in research (see Laudel) and teaching; quantification and evaluation of academic work; and increasing dependence on these quantitative measures to define and assess academic productivity and efficiency, as well as the reputation of individuals, disciplines (Young *et al.*), and institutions (Levin; Jarwal *et al.*).² There are also, of course, advocates for these changes: promoters of 'excellence' in teaching (Lovegrove and Clarke; Walshe); 'quality assurance' (see essays with Shah as lead author; Sharrock); and the inclusion of humanities in the list of disciplines that can become entrepreneurial (Cunningham).

A recent contribution to the body of critical work is Chris Lorenz's 'If You're So Smart, Why are You under Surveillance? Universities, Neoliberalism, and New Public Management', published in the leading humanities journal *Critical Inquiry*. Lorenz identifies many of the shifts analysed in other scholarship, while adding a new ingredient to the mix, one that he argues explains why humanities academics—trained in critique—seem powerless to argue effectively against changes which they see as damaging to the quality of higher education. Drawing on Harry G. Frankfurt's *On Bullshit*, Lorenz argues that New Public Management—the term he gives to the implementation of neoliberal policies in the public sector, including universities—is 'a bullshit discourse'. In a way that parallels forms of governance found in dictatorships, university management 'bullshit' is not concerned with truth or lies, only with advancing agendas. The main strategy and effect of 'bullshit' is to pervert into their opposites concepts such as efficiency, quality, transparency, accountability and flexibility. For Lorenz, the 'hermetic, self-referential nature' of such 'bullshit' has 'proved to be completely resistant to all criticism for over thirty years' (601).

This designating of managerial discourse as 'bullshit' is obviously satisfying—pleasing and affirming even—in expressing the anger many academics feel about policy- and decision-making in higher education. More specifically, Lorenz's criticism of the pervasiveness and persuasiveness of terms such as efficiency, accountability and flexibility in university management discourse resonates with many academics' own understandings of universities as rational and principled institutions dedicated to ideals of judicious scholarship and independent teaching. But however satisfying this critique, we argue that affiliating with it has negative consequences. Calling managerial discourse 'bullshit' on the one hand minimises the impact of the transformation of universities over the last three decades ('that's just bullshit'); on the other, it offers no effective way of analysing or contesting these transformations. If those who use bullshit to justify changes do not care whether they are lying or telling the truth, there is no more to say.

Arguably, part of the appeal of Lorenz's essay lies in its fit with what has been called the 'archaic hyperindividualism of our prevailing academic ethos' (Damrosch 7), in that designating managerial discourse 'bullshit' provides a reason to continue to avoid collective action. But if the last year in Australia—which has included proposed mass sackings of academics at two of the most privileged universities, the University of Sydney and the Australian National University—has shown anything, it is that the transformation of higher education has reached a new and critical stage, one in which dismissing arguments for change as 'bullshit' and turning back to research and teaching is insufficient, even irresponsible. In that spirit, and as a contribution to this debate, we seek to understand the ways in which Australian universities are being constructed and transformed by analysing one of the most recent and public instances of a proposal for 'transformation': ³ La Trobe University's 'Organisational Change Impact Statement' (OCIS), a 58-page document which outlines the case for sacking 41 academic staff in the Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences.

This analysis is not concerned with criticising the document's language (à la Don Watson), although the OCIS certainly provides readers with opportunities for doing so. ⁴ Nor do we seek to comment on the responses of staff and students to this document, nor even on the outcomes of this restructuring. Our aim is different: by analysing the rhetoric used in the OCIS, we examine the type of university, staff and student that the document imagines and brings into being; the contradictory ways it argues for these changes and this new structure; and the implications of this rhetoric for our understanding of higher education. Our analysis treats managerial discourse not as intractable or dismissible 'bullshit', but as a powerful—though, we will demonstrate, highly unstable—system of meaning, the proliferation of which has significant consequences for students and workers in Australian universities, and for Australian society more broadly. Such analysis is needed because the normalising of new forms of institution, subjectivity and process is what neoliberal managerialism aims to achieve.

1. Background

La Trobe University opened its first and largest campus in the outer Melbourne suburb of Bundoora in the late 1960s, in a period of significant expansion of higher education. In its early years, La Trobe was synonymous with cultural diversity, politicised teaching and student protest. Its constituencies included a disproportionate number of women, students from non-English-speaking and working-class backgrounds, and from outer suburbs and regional areas. The residues of this history are evident in the one-sentence statement of 'Our Vision' on the University home page: 'La Trobe University will continue to enhance its profile nationally and internationally and will achieve wide recognition for delivering socially responsible, inclusive, relevant and radical learning, teaching and research' ('About La Trobe'). While a generation of universities—among them Murdoch, Flinders, Griffith and Wollongong—entertained similar beginnings, no other Australian university has so overtly proclaimed its continuing commitment to radicalism as part of its institutional function and identity. Forty years after its founding, La Trobe has just over thirty thousand students, and campuses at Albury/Wodonga, Bendigo, Mildura and Shepparton; its students are still drawn disproportionately from rural areas.

Just as La Trobe has experienced major growth and transformation, so have funding models, student bodies, and the role of universities across the sector. Among the most important changes to the forms and goals of higher education were those initiated by then education minister John Dawkins in the late 1980s and early 1990s, which turned a hierarchical arrangement of colleges, institutes of technology, new universities and research universities into what was promoted as a 'unified national system'. This played well in regional and outer metropolitan areas, where the status of institutions appeared to be raised, and not so well with those who found the demand to seek doctoral qualifications and conduct research more daunting than invigorating. More broadly, this spreading of the research mandate presented a collision between 'excellence' and equity that still plays out in debates about how higher education should be organised. Perhaps the most salient element of this transformation is encapsulated in the outcome of a 2002 government review, which 'found a "broad consensus that the current arrangements for funding universities were not sustainable"' (Stokes and Wright 7).

The policy response to this finding of chronic underfunding was not an increase in expenditure, but a deregulation of student fees. The ensuing increases disproportionately affected the participation rates in higher education of students from lower socio-economic groups and students from regional areas (constituencies over-represented at La Trobe), and seemed to suggest that a kind of 'tipping point' in affordability for members of these groups had been reached (Stokes and Wright 9). In the past few years, competition between universities in Australia has been turbo-charged. Due perhaps to the Australian sector's unusually heavy reliance on income provided by graduate and international students, all institutions must now join (or more accurately, seem to join) the competition against what Simon Marginson calls 'super-league universities' ('Global' 10). ⁵ As in the United States, the rhetorical place for what sociologist Gaye Tuchman calls a 'respectable regional research

university' (7) seems no longer to exist. The Australian system has also had to cope with pressure to expand numbers. Comparing American, British and Canadian universities with Australian ones, it is clear that, around the turn of the twentieth century, the latter group had the greatest disparity between increases in numbers of students and staff (Association 12). In this same period, government funding for universities 'fell in real terms by an estimated 30%' (Welch 305; Marginson, 'Global' 20), while overseas student numbers quadrupled (Davies and Harcourt 119). Australian universities have a small proportion of the kind of income available even for struggling American public institutions. At 'Wannabe U', the fictional name Tuchman gives to the institution that is the focus of her case study of higher education, the annual income was around \$US1.5 billion, for 12,000 students; at the University of Western Australia, long reputed to be one of the wealthier Australian universities, reported income at around the same time was \$A500 million for nearly 18,000 students ('Statistical'). Not surprisingly, the future envisaged by Marginson for the Australian system is gloomy: 'locked into the role of global polytechnic' ('Global' 28).

It is in this context that John Dewar, La Trobe University's Vice-Chancellor, offered a 'message' about proposed changes to the Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences on 21 June 2012. On the same day a draft OCIS was posted online, with links for students to provide feedback. The document proposed a re-arrangement of administration, the loss of 45 full-time positions in the Faculty, closure of several programs or subject areas, and significant reduction in the range of individual academic subjects. On 17 July, amidst the consultation process, the Dean of Arts, Tim Murray, launched a defence of the proposals in Melbourne's *Age* newspaper, explicitly rejecting the notion that 'managerial' thinking was behind the proposals. He posed a rhetorical question in terms that aligned him with La Trobe's tradition of leading social change, conversely positioning academics and students (many of whom opposed the changes) as reactionaries: 'why is it that every time an arts faculty in this country decides to take a good look at itself and tries to respond to [social change], the first reaction from many people is that managerial barbarians are at the gate and the whole enterprise is about to collapse?' Rather than expressing support for or opposition to 'managerial barbarians', we seek to understand the document's terms of reference, specifically by exploring two questions asked of higher education for generations, and implicitly raised by the OCIS: What is the university? What is its future? And the emerging question, what is the market? Our focus is on the final version of the OCIS, posted on 10 August 2012.⁶

Before embarking on this analysis, we should note that very few of the contextual elements outlined above—trends in policy, student demographics and funding, or even well publicised debates about the safety of overseas students in Melbourne (likely to affect overseas student enrolments)—are even mentioned in the OCIS, let alone discussed in detail as they relate to La Trobe's specific situation. This minimisation of context significantly inflates the degree to which actors associated with the university are represented as having the capacity to control outcomes such as student enrolments. Using the limited terms of the OCIS, the task La Trobe sets itself can be summarised thus: 'to devise and install the new disciplines institutions need to rationalise programs, select market niches, capture opportunities and attract private sponsors—all without abandoning their public mission, lowering standards or damaging reputation' (Sharrock 9). More realistic as an assessment of the current challenges facing Australian higher education is the comparison offered by an unnamed administrator at an Australian university: 'landing a jumbo jet on an aircraft carrier in a storm' (Davies and Harcourt 117).

2. What is the University?

The OCIS is concerned with identifying, criticising and re-imaging the structure of 'the Faculty' or HUSS (as the Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences is referred to) in its relationship to an entity called 'the University'. The manner in which this occurs—while by no means consistent in its representation of the current meaning or future consequences of this structure—is driven by a narrative of separation, internal division and unification, one that is particularly aligned with notions of responsibility and, at least for the Faculty, of accountability. This narrative is especially focused on financial matters, and relates to ongoing debate about the distribution of funding *within* universities.

Where one might imagine 'the University' to contain all its individuals—students and staff—and systems or structures—faculties, departments, centres, courses—indeed, where one might understand these individuals and systems to make up or constitute 'the University', this view is generally not reflected in the OCIS. There are exceptions. In a small number of cases, the Faculty is described as part of the University, as in: 'The changes will provide limited if any savings in 2012, requiring the Faculty to effectively continue to be significantly subsidised by *other* parts of the University' (39, our emphasis). Sometimes elements of 'the Faculty' are depicted as contributing to the position or role of 'the University': for instance, the Asian Studies and Indonesian programs, closed in the draft but retained in the final OCIS, have 'a significant role in positioning the University' (12), while the Sports Journalism program and the 'Centre of Applied Archaeology and Cultural Heritage

Management' contribute to promoting 'a niche market for the University' (25). At other times, 'the University' and 'the Faculty' work together: for instance, the 'proactive strategy' proposed in the OCIS involves 'research into emerging areas of demand where the Faculty and the University can develop innovative offerings and lead the sector' (4).

For the most part, however, 'University' and 'Faculty' are identified as separate entities, their relationship based on accountability rather than common interest, trust or rights. 'The current (unsustainable) relationship between these two entities is one in which 'the University' supports, enables and invests in 'the Faculty', while 'the Faculty' takes from the University without sufficiently reciprocating by meeting its responsibilities. This relationship is reflected in the prevalence in the document of, on the one hand, the language of charity (enabling, assisting, supporting, providing for) when referring to 'the University', and of 'failure' (7) (insufficiency, unsustainability, shortfalls)—particularly in meeting 'targets' (2, 7, 8, 24)—when referring to 'the Faculty'. This separation of 'Faculty' and 'University' is most apparent in the financial support the latter supposedly provides for the former, for example: 'While the University will continue to *support* the Faculty, the financial *shortfall* and the underlying causes that have led to this challenging financial situation *must be* addressed'; 'The Faculty will be *supported* by a transition *support* amount in the 2013 and 2014 budgets to *assist* in addressing this *shortfall*, but the Faculty *will be required* to fully meet its budget in 2015' (2, 15, our emphasis).

In some cases the OCIS indicates that the Faculty and the University will fund different parts of the change plan; however, significantly, funding from the University to the Faculty is presented as support (voluntary and benign—a *choice*), while funding from the Faculty to the University is presented as obligation (involuntary and inevitable—a *responsibility*). For example, the remission from the Faculty to the University in 2012 of \$3.56 million (budgeted, or \$3.146 million forecasted)—close to three quarters of the Faculty's entire (forecasted) deficit, and cited as the trigger for the changes outlined in the OCIS—is designated 'Prescribed reinvestment in the University' and presented as simply 'necessary': 'Such funds are *necessary* to maintain teaching and research infrastructure and to make *necessary* investments in intellectual innovation' (22, our emphasis). Meanwhile, the \$5.375 million (budgeted, or \$5.747 million forecasted) money from the Faculty for 'University strategic Initiatives [sic] including research investments, scholarship, academic initiatives, operational plan, and international and development initiatives' is a 'contribution' (22). More bluntly, it could be argued from these figures that the deficit—the prompt for the proposed restructure—is the direct creation of the central administration's demand for an increased proportion of income generated by the Faculty's teaching and research.

Insofar as financial support for 'the Faculty' is a key characteristic of 'the University', Table 9 in the OCIS document would suggest that the answer to the question, 'What is the university?' is 'a composite of senior management and successful faculties'. Titled 'Support from other faculties', this table shows how surpluses from the Faculties of Health Sciences; Science, Technology and Engineering; and Business, Economics and Law are being redirected to HUSS. More generally, however, 'the University' presented in the OCIS does not include even successful Faculties, but is simply senior management. This can be seen in the depiction of the main responsibilities of 'the University' not as teaching and research but as making policy—for instance, on 'low enrolment subjects' (17)—and refining its own strategic 'vision' (11, 17, 30). Not only is 'the University' in this form not responsible for earning money; in an important way—that is, rhetorically—it does not spend or cost anything. This is shown in the exclusion of the very substantial 'central costs' from many of the graphs, which are presented as supporting the case for a reduction in staff, programs and courses in HUSS. Depicting salary as a percentage of 'Total Expenses exc[uding] Central Costs', Table 11 shows that, in 2012, 93 per cent of the Faculty's budget goes toward salaries, an increase from 88 per cent in 2011. The OCIS argues that 'reductions in salary expenditure are required' (24). However, the fact that Table 8 shows the 'Total Employee Benefits and On costs' as \$31,970 million, out of a total budget of \$71,181 million, indicates just how much money the excluding of central costs involves. Thus, despite evidence that 'the University' as an entity is actually supported by Faculty revenue, 'the University' (in this form at least) fades into the background, specifically when it is argued that certain costs must be reduced.

More broadly, because the OCIS represents the Faculty as taking responsibility for addressing its own failings, 'the Faculty' rather than 'the University' emerges as the main actor in the OCIS. This feature of the document accounts for the first sentence in the OCIS—'The Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences is undertaking an organisational restructure to position the Faculty for a sustainable future' (2). So too: 'The Faculty proposes to make significant changes to its organisation' (3); 'The Faculty proposes ... a restructure of the Faculty' (4); 'The Faculty concluded that ... the issues facing the Faculty are Faculty wide and therefore require a Faculty wide solution' (12); 'The Faculty is also proposing to change the faculty structure' (13). While it is possible to speculate that, in the first instance in these sentences 'the Faculty' refers to the Executive Dean, or the Executive Dean and the Faculty Executive, and otherwise to academic programs and academics themselves, this is not clear. To some extent, this lack of clarity occurs because the document's author/s are not named; and

commensurate with this concealment of agency, in those cases where the Faculty is not identified as instigating change, the passive voice is used: 'it is proposed ... it is proposed ... it is proposed' (12). Whereas critiques of neoliberal economic thinking point to an efflorescence of managerial control, here that control is strangely distorted and disavowed: in one sense, it would seem that Faculty management perceives itself as a victim, not of the central administration's demand for money, but of academics' and students' failure to produce sufficient income for those demands to be met.

At the same time as it demands income, 'the University' is presented as the benign dispenser of good will. In keeping with the rhetoric of charity surrounding its activities, 'the University' is often depicted as supporting and enabling—even ameliorating—the changes initiated by the Faculty. Thus, 'The University will seek to minimise the disruption for staff wherever reasonably possible' (49); 'The University will support affected HDR students' (16). In a small number of instances, in enacting the Faculty's changes, the activities of 'the University' are described in terms of commitment, such as: 'A commitment by the University to the continuation of teaching in Gender, Sexuality and Diversity Studies' (36); or 'The University also commits to students that the tutorial sizes will not be increased' (16). Such commitments, however, are presented not as responsibilities, but as ethical pledges that 'the University' has opted to make to lessen the impact of changes determined by the Faculty. To the extent that it has any relationship to these changes, 'the University' ameliorates their negative effects; it is in no way an indebted agent.

The key change the OCIS proposes is reducing the number of individual subjects available to students enrolled in the Bachelor of Arts, one of 16 degree courses taught by staff in HUSS. The document is emphatic in declaring, 'the proposed changes do not involve restructuring of the existing 15 stand-alone degrees outside of the Bachelor of Arts and their subjects' (3, original emphasis). However, multiple graphs supposedly providing support for reductions in the BA present statistics relating to HUSS as a whole. For instance, Table 1 (showing the Australian Tertiary Admission Rank [ATAR] results for HUSS), Table 3 (showing the number of subjects offered across HUSS) and Table 12 (showing the student retention rate in HUSS) are introduced by the statement: 'Taken together these data (ATARs, First preferences, market share and retention) support a generalisation that for stand-alone degrees ATARs, timely first preferences, and retention rates are all generally higher than for the Bachelor of Arts' (18). Enrolment targets (shown in Table 10) are also for HUSS, not the BA. While reforming the BA curriculum is repeatedly identified as the main aim and focus of the OCIS, the number of subjects in the Faculty as a whole is employed as evidence of the need for restructuring. On the one hand, it is never clear why one kind of proliferation (of subjects) necessitates radical reform, whereas another kind of proliferation (of degree courses) is evidence of health. On the other, the statistical evidence presented, regarding entry levels, enrolment numbers and offerings, constantly blurs these two categories of proliferation to validate a narrative of Faculty decline.

This simultaneous separation and aggregation of degree programs reflects the instability of the document's rhetorical separation of the Bachelor of Arts and the Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences; 'the Faculty', like 'the University', is both a single and a fractured entity. As noted, this division occurs in the differentiation of that part of the Faculty (the managers) who are proposing and will implement changes upon the Faculty (academic staff and teaching programs). But it is more extensive than that. At various points in the OCIS, academics are separated from 'the Faculty' in the present and implicitly in the future. For example, 'the Faculty has drafted a Teaching and Learning Plan which is still under consideration by academic staff' (26). This is an example of the subtle but powerful ways in which academic work (teaching) and student experiences (learning) are separated from the active functioning of the Faculty (preparing a plan to control and direct teaching and learning).⁷ Similarly, academics can be suddenly and implacably separated from the Faculty: affected 'staff members will be required to make a submission to the Faculty to allow it to evaluate the employee's past and likely future contributions to the Faculty' (51). Such a statement almost perfectly echoes Charles Taylor's assumption that workers are 'almost certainly inefficient' and, on that basis, should be 'singled out, to be rewarded or punished on the basis of his or her individual performance' (Miller and O'Leary 104).

Accompanying and reinforcing the depiction of a simultaneously united and fractured Faculty is tension between a rhetoric that reinforces the value of disciplinary expertise, and one that presents disciplines as inhibiting the functioning of both Faculty and University. 'The Faculty' is internally divided by what are called 'academic and administrative silos' (6, 8, 34) or 'legacy frameworks' (8, 34).⁸ Although the 'culture of the Faculty' is 'entrenched' in these frameworks (8), they are not defined. Their meaning, however, is clearly pejorative, as silos and frameworks have 'in some cases inhibited effective and efficient teaching and learning and made inter-disciplinary collaborations in teaching and research more difficult to achieve' (34). While sometimes acknowledging the value of disciplines—for instance, 'The Faculty recognises that it is necessary to maintain discipline-specific majors'—the OCIS generally aims to unify a Faculty, supposedly fractured by specialisations, through 'interdisciplinary' (or 'inter-disciplinary', 'multi disciplinary', 'multi-disciplinary' or 'cross-disciplinary') teaching and

research (3, 4, 5, 9, 11, 12, 13, 14, 27, 29, 30, 31, 33).

Interdisciplinarity was an orthodox element of the new Australian universities' 'branding' in the 1970s, constituting a rhetorical means by which they could position their inner metropolitan rivals as the procrustean homes of disciplines. However, the challenges of this interdisciplinary future are evident in the contrast between the claims that the restructure will produce 'focussed offerings of majors, discipline areas and subjects' (8), while the 'interdisciplinary major' will make it 'possible for staff to teach outside of their discipline area promoting a more resilient and collaborative curriculum', providing 'positive opportunities for staff development' (11). This organisation of value reflects a further fracturing: between past and present. While the building of reputation in universities has been closely associated with longevity and stability, in the OCIS the past is a place of failure. The document proposes to overcome the inertia produced by specialisation and inflexibility through unification, wherein interdisciplinarity and the resulting flexibility in staff deployment produce success. In this, the document mirrors the fetishising of 'agility' in neoliberal managerial imperatives, as institutions proclaim their capacity to be "robust, resilient, responsive, flexible, innovative and adaptable" (Ryan 8 quoting Gillies 210). But tensions remain. For example, while the OCIS claims that the interdisciplinary major to be introduced on regional campuses will 'have a positive influence on students' capacity to understand and contribute to contemporary social issues' (5), at the Melbourne campus 'greater focus' in the BA will 'assist in attraction, engagement and retention of students' (9). A similar tension is apparent in the claims that 'Maintaining a focus on traditional curricula, including maintaining current majors, subjects and staffing is clearly not proving to be a successful model', but that 'The Faculty continues to support the traditional aims to develop a body of knowledge, critical thinking, and a reflexive awareness of ourselves and the world' (2).

3. What is the Market?

As stated more than once in the OCIS, the market is 'key' to the changes proposed, and specifically, to 'shaping the future curriculum' (2, 18). The document is suffused with references to the market, especially 'market share' (2, 7, 18, 19, 20, 24, 25)—a term that is mentioned six times in the rationale for the proposed restructuring—but also 'market position' (2), 'a market driven ... environment' (3), 'new markets' (4), 'market intelligence' (18), 'market trends' (18), 'market contraction' (19), 'niche market' (25), 'market shock' (26, 29), 'market place' (29), 'highly competitive market' (26, 29), the 'positive attention of the market' (3) and marketing strategies (19, 20, 35, 44). In the Preamble, the first topic is 'Financial'; discussion of the other topics—'Curriculum' and 'Research'—is predominantly concerned with their financial implications. Also clear throughout the OCIS is the equation of this 'market' with student enrolments and preferences. The Preamble states that the Faculty's 'market position in terms of its ability to attract high quality and adequate numbers of students is in decline, and has been for the past 15 years' (2). Tables 4 and 5 depict 'market share' as a direct measure of student enrolments, and students and markets are further aligned in the terminology used to describe financial imperatives, including 'student load projections' (2, 8, 15, 24), 'student enrolment targets' (7), 'student load target' (7) or 'student load gap' (21, 22).

Given that the market is key, and students are the market, one would expect the OCIS to pay close attention to trends in student enrolment at La Trobe and other Victorian universities. Instead, while repeatedly affirming the need 'to meet current and future market trends in student demand' (18)—to 'respond to' or 'reflect' student demand (3, 16) and, in so doing, to create a curriculum that is 'more attractive to students' (16)—the document pays little attention to the shape or specifics of this 'market'. Underpinning this lack of interest is not apathy, but what can only be described as a deep sense of anxiety—even fear—about this market and its unpredictability, an undercurrent that has significant consequences for the OCIS's construction of curriculum and teaching in higher education. Such anxiety is most apparent in a paragraph, repeated twice, essentially unchanged, indicating its significance. The proposed changes to the curriculum, the document argues, will focus on and develop:

the Faculty's current strengths and identify future opportunities for the Faculty to grow its teaching and research in a highly competitive market, characterised by uncertainties of student demand and government funding. Thus it will be an important factor in ensuring the resilience of the Faculty in the face of 'market shock'. (26, 29)

The uncertainties of student demand—and the seeming inevitability of 'market shock'—portray La Trobe as an institution operating in and responding to a market that is profoundly unpredictable. These uncertainties are linked explicitly to the removal, in 2012, of government quotas for student enrolment: 'we are in the early days', the OCIS proclaims, 'of a demand-driven system [that makes it] difficult to accurately model potential impacts' (39). Far from celebrating the 'freedom' and 'flexibility' represented by the move to a market-driven system—in which universities are funded for all enrolled students—

this shift is presented as a source of vulnerability and volatility: these are 'unprecedented conditions associated with the deregulation of the higher education sector' (27). We are close, here, to the jumbo jet analogy, but because the document never explicitly defines or analyses the 'market', either past or present, it is impossible to develop plausible analyses of the future. Paradoxically, then, although the new demand-driven system is, by definition in the OCIS, the source of uncertainty, such uncertainty is used to predict future failure without change: 'The new demand driven [sic] system will result in a further erosion of [La Trobe's Bachelor of Arts'] market share if measures are not taken now to alter the structure and the offerings of the Faculty' (7).

This anxiety explains what might otherwise seem a baffling lack of interest in—or at least, of detailed attention to—the nature of 'the market'. For instance, the central problem addressed by the OCIS is falling market share. In terms of the BA, the document acknowledges that: 'All other [Victorian] universities are dwarfed in this market' by Melbourne University, which has more than two thirds of enrolments in 2012, compared with La Trobe's six per cent (19; although again it is not clear whether this refers only to La Trobe's BA, or to all 16 HUSS degrees). Given this context, and if Melbourne is positioning itself in the 'super-league', one would expect significant detail about the kind of student that the restructure aims to attract, considered in relation to La Trobe's existing student profile. But if such work underpins the OCIS, no evidence of it appears. In fact, although a sense of failure clearly arises from comparison to other Victorian universities (particularly Deakin), and although curriculum changes are designed to enable 'closer alignment in course structure with our competitors' (5), there is little or no analysis of the degree structures or identities available to Victorian students, other than repeated references to number of subjects offered (2, 8, 20-21, 24). One of the more interesting changes, in this regard, between the draft and final OCIS is that the former referred to 1,200 subjects available to BA students, and the latter to 900 (to be reduced to 400), reinforcing the view that there had not been detailed assessment of offerings (or their costs) prior to drafting the proposal.

The insistent association of market and students—compounded by the anxiety this association motivates—places students, like 'the Faculty', outside 'the University'. As the market, students may well surround or even determine the direction of 'the University', but they are not part of the institution. There is an unsettling sense of passivity here, and plaintiveness almost redolent of Freud's question, 'what does a woman want?' All the Faculty can do is reshape its offerings and hope they are 'attractive', a strategy that mimics that of public companies, and the recent inflated pressure on them 'to look beautiful in the eyes of the passing voyeur; institutional beauty consisted in demonstrating signs of internal change and flexibility, appearing to be a dynamic company' (Sennett 40).

At the same time as the OCIS battles with uncertainty about student preferences, it presents vocational training as a clear student demand. For instance, one example of 'ground work ... undertaken ... to improve the Faculty' (3)—or elsewhere, the 'first stage of reform' (25)—was 'the development and successful introduction of the "Work Ready BA", which has attracted positive attention in the market' (3). This program aimed to assist with the precise market problems identified in the document—'with recruitment and with retention' (or present and future student demand)—'by providing a sense of purpose and clarity to students about possible graduate outcomes' (24). The OCIS is 'strongly aligned with and guided by the Strategic Directions paper—"World Ready", recently released by the Vice-Chancellor'⁹—which strongly reinforces this positive association of vocational training with clarity and purpose by emphasising that it would 'equip all La Trobe graduates with the skills and knowledge needed to flourish in the workplaces of the 21st century' (3). Where a vocational degree enables a flourishing and clarity of purpose, the OCIS presents the unreconstructed BA as 'large, unfocussed and confusing ... mak[ing] it difficult for students to navigate their way through' (7).

In light of the palpable uncertainty about what students want, it might seem difficult to understand why the OCIS would place such emphasis on vocational courses. Indeed, even stranger is that the institution would persist with these changes—ostensibly to respond to or reflect student preferences—in the face of protests from students arguing that these changes are not what they want (Cooper and Preiss; Preiss 'Gender', 'Oh', 'University', 'Vice'; 'Protest'). However, the very uncertainty about what is 'attractive to students' (8) provides a possible reason for this approach. As students/the market function in this document almost as a black box—of potentially changeable desires and demands, symbolising danger and potential destruction—it makes sense that, in attempting to understand this black box, the OCIS authors would project their own ideas about the value of an education onto this space. Just as Freud concluded that what women *really* want is 'to be a man', so too do the authors of the document, in answering the question 'what does a student want?', see a reflection of themselves: someone who wants to know and be able to respond to and capture the market. As seen in various North American examples, then, 'Student identities are flexible, defined and redefined by institutional market behaviours' (Slaughter and Rhoades 2), but also by their behaviours *as* a market. In this context, the gratification of a projected student need is in fact

a gratification of the *administrative* need to be predictable in one's desires, and to be part of a predictable future. But constructing students as a market whose desire is to be marketable also presents a dramatic tightening of the intellectual and cultural terms of reference of the debate about the nature and function of university education. In effect, student preferences are erased if they do not conform to neoliberal framings of the *terms* of value.

Commensurately, the equating of students and the market has profound implications for the document's construction of university teaching: specifically, it transforms curriculum design and delivery from a pedagogical to a marketing endeavour. The Vice-Chancellor's 'World Ready' paper, as summarised in the OCIS, demands 'being better able to adapt quickly to respond to a market driven and changing environment', while 'becoming comprehensively student focused, and adapting our curriculum content and modes of delivery to students' preferences rather than our own' (3). This second aim appears to strive for what, in the scholarly literature, is termed a 'student-centred' approach to teaching and learning.¹⁰ Yet where a student-centred approach demands the exercise of professional judgement and responsibility from university teachers—in recognising and responding to students' different backgrounds, requirements and modes of learning—by constructing student needs as student demands and attractiveness, 'World Ready' and the OCIS render students' judgements pre-eminent.¹¹ More specifically, the demand that academics adapt 'curriculum content and modes of delivery to students' preferences rather than our own' not only refuses a pedagogical basis for current approaches, it accuses academics, in general, of irresponsibly in pursuing their own 'preferences' in the design and delivery of subjects. Thus, these two demands by the Vice-Chancellor—of being 'better able to adapt quickly to respond to a market driven and changing environment' and 'becoming comprehensively student focused' (3)—are, in fact, one and the same, and are premised on the breakdown of adherence to academic goals.

With students' preferences contested and changeable—and aligned with the market—what is actually required of university teachers is not so much research and teaching, but a hair-trigger responsiveness to the market: 'ensur[ing] improvement and development of [the Faculty's] entire curriculum so that it can respond quickly and efficiently to changing student demand' (4). But this approach is doomed to failure, for the annual cycle of admissions means that the Faculty's responses to student demand must always be belated; of necessity, the 'lessons' learned from one cohort's preferences might not apply to the next. The inevitable coupling of belated change and failure is at odds with the document's repeated insistence on the necessity of change and its benefits, as well as the capacity of the Faculty to predict the terms of 'attraction' in 'the market'. Such belatedness also highlights another tension in the document: between leading and following. HUSS will both 'ensure' that it can 'respond quickly and efficiently to changing student demand' AND 'develop innovative offers and lead the sector'. Combined with the construction of curricula as at once monumental (what will distinguish the La Trobe BA) and infinitely malleable (driven by demand for change), this rhetoric positions HUSS academics as workers who can only prove their professionalism by the frequency and speed with which they change, always becoming different from the past.

4. What is the future?

With the present and immediate past characterised, as we have discussed, by a failure to meet targets and to be attractive, the OCIS envisages a future of meeting targets: indeed, making targets is the means by which the OCIS imagines the future. References to targets suffuse the document, such that research plans are expressed only in these terms—'The Faculty's current research plan aims to see the Faculty return to the top 100 of its kind in the world' (3)—and earnings, once *planned*, become concrete—'Continuing student enrolments for 2012 were significantly below target, resulting in lost planned income of \$2.47M for this year' (7). Leaving aside the question of whether something planned can be lost, these statements show that the restructuring is designed to create a Faculty able to meet targets. The OCIS details the characteristics of an entity ostensibly able to do this: one with 26 majors and two schools. At a deeper level, however, the risk and instability of the market render all targets infinitely pliable; a terrifying situation when making and meeting targets defines the future and possibility of success. The OCIS responds to this situation by envisaging not a particular structure but an impossible entity: one that, by always responding immediately, efficiently and effectively to any change, will somehow achieve 'a sustainable future' (2). This tension between change and stability provides a conflicted vision of the future.

As discussed, the OCIS aims to remove the 'silos' or 'legacy frameworks'—what we have interpreted as disciplinary structures—that divide the Faculty. While aligned with future interdisciplinary, such scholarly and pedagogical outcomes—despite receiving a good deal of attention—are not the end point of the restructuring. Rather, interdisciplinarity is simply one manifestation of a broader unity and cohesion—and resulting efficiency, accountability and flexibility—that the OCIS imagines for the Faculty. Thus, abolishing 'silos' and 'legacy frameworks' addresses the problems of 'poor information flow within the

Faculty and blurred lines of accountability and responsibility' (8, 34). More broadly, the restructuring:

seek[s] sustainable and operational efficiencies by ensuring that the organisational structure ... clarifies decision rights and responsibilities and strengthens accountability across the Faculty/Schools/Departments; ... focus[ses] on reducing the complexities and the elimination of convoluted links between Departments/Schools/Faculty and the University; leverage[s] our people so that the right jobs required are developed, that the right people are appointed in the right jobs with clear responsibilities and accountabilities ...; [and is] designed to ensure that the work systems are streamlined to get the job done. (34-35)

This restructured entity aims to ensure efficiency and accountability by perfectly aligning form and function. With no barriers impeding 'work systems', this entity also optimises the visibility of flows of knowledge and responsibility, creating clear lines of sight for managers keen to ensure that all parts meet their responsibilities, again in the Taylorist mode.¹²

Thus, despite all the arguments about why the BA should be changed, the ultimate aim of the restructuring is to 'streamline work processes' and 'permit *maximum rationalisation* of subject numbers and staff workloads' (33, our emphasis). Above all else, this restructured entity embodies 'flexibility', a term used to refer not only to flexible learning or delivery—although these are mentioned repeatedly (5, 9, 21, 24, 28, 29, 38, 39)—but to the flexibility of staff and of the system as a whole. To inhabit this system, a new kind of academic subjectivity is envisioned and required: staff are infinitely malleable in their capacity to meet student 'demand' and thus fulfil the needs of the 'market', unhindered by their own judgement. While the OCIS also wishes—and attempts—to construct a new kind of student subjectivity, predictable in its needs and demands (for the vocational), in acknowledging the unpredictability and risk of the student/market, the document essentially admits that this disciplined student subjectivity is now impossible. But academics, and by implication their colleagues in administration, are constructed as a synecdoche of 'the Faculty': self-regulating, 'responsible', 'accountable', 'flexible'. In this future, academic subjectivity is organised around conformity to the demands of institutional operation—or even processes and work systems—rather than to a political mission (the old La Trobe) or a discipline (embedded in the demand for scholarship and teaching).

It is the persistent use of 'change' as a euphemism for reductions, and 'flexibility' as a euphemism for deprofessionalisation and casualisation, that has engendered such wide-spread scepticism, among academics, about such documents and processes. They readily perceive that the agenda within universities is framed in terms of the conditions of labour demanded by neoliberalism. As Richard Sennett argues, the reduction of impediments provoked by expertise (insisting that to be done well something should be done in a particular way) are, crucially, not by-products, but intended effects, of a neoliberal agenda. In terms of the *effects* of such changes, to the creation of 'social deficits of loyalty and informal trust' we can add the erosion of 'the value of accumulated experience' and 'the hollowing out of ability' (Sennett 127). Ultimately, the flexibility characterising the future academic and system in the OCIS is analogous to that of a machine, the parts of which can be disassembled and reassembled to optimise functionality. The removal of poorly functioning parts (academics and subjects which are failing to please 'the market') is an essential element of the disaggregation and recombination that is 'organisational change'. And the reward for optimising function is 'fit' (or perhaps 'fitness'): inclusion into 'the University', an entity that is itself an efficiently functioning (because efficiently managed) machine. From this perspective, the targets through which the OCIS envisages the future conform to the assembly line notion of 'productivity target[s]': 'Each operation in the manufacturing process is assigned a productivity target. This value represents the minimum number of conformant products (value-added entities) per designated period'.¹³

Conclusions

Although references to a 'vision' in the OCIS might appear merely rhetorical—as in 'our vision of an excellent, innovative, distinctive, resilient and sustainable curriculum' (31), or 'Develop excellent, innovative, distinctive, resilient and sustainable curricula that are attractive to students and provide a balance between continuity, stability, responsiveness and flexibility within the market' (8)—the terms in which this 'vision' is expressed accurately show the ways in which the OCIS envisages the Faculty working: as a machine so perfectly 'rationalised' that it can be deployed to any task in a way that is perpetually sustainable. The problem with this metaphor of a perpetual motion machine is not only the de-personalised and de-professionalised model it represents, which has workers reduced to separate yet interchangeable pieces of machinery, made to perform tasks for which they are not equipped. There is also the very real sense that, even as the OCIS reaches for this streamlined and rationalised 'Faculty', the model is unachievable due to the risk and uncertainty of the market. No matter

how stripped down and oiled the parts of the machine, shifting market/student demand will, in effect, inevitably and perpetually throw sand in the works. And if the university aims to attract students who are lured by flexibility, efficiency and accountability, it is not clear why, having now enrolled in (but still not part of) 'the University', these students would not easily be lured by the next good offer. Can maximum rationalisation produce an environment for students to think critically and with sustained purpose about their chosen subjects? What might be the long-term consequences of hundreds of thousands of tertiary students' experience of a version of education dedicated to stripping back and disabling expertise; shooting for short-term gain; and gauging profit as the only useful (because measurable) outcome of the functioning of the higher education machine? And in relation to academics, if 'internalised professional norms are ... essential' to 'quality university teaching' (Aspromourgos 48), what are the effects on them of damaging faith in the institution?

Although clearly impossible in fact, the OCIS model—of a perpetually changing/perpetually stable Faculty/University machine—signals profound changes for higher education as it has been conceived in the English-speaking world. These changes *do* pervert into their opposites concepts such as efficiency, quality, transparency, accountability and flexibility. And this capacity *does* render documents such as the OCIS—and the discourse more broadly—difficult to critique: not only words, but meanings, metaphors and effects slip and slide, are difficult to pin down. But difficulty is not impossibility; and indeed, the multiple tensions underpinning this discourse—in the OCIS, between leading and following, change and stability, expertise as positive and negative—produce an instability that can be identified and put under pressure. Doing so is a necessary first step in clearing away the bullshit that surrounds the transformation of higher education in Australia, and imaging an alternative system. However, it is only a first step. And if 'bullshit' is not impervious to critique, as Lorenz argues, we need to look elsewhere to understand why we have arrived at this current state. This second step may prove even more difficult because, while academics are trained to critique the discourse of others—in this case, university managers and government policy-makers—we are perhaps not so adept at analysing our own assumptions, investments and biases in our workplaces, as opposed to our scholarship.

Christopher Newfield's devastating critique of his own discipline of English points to two features of academic discourse in the humanities that either resonate with, or compound the intransigency of, the neoliberal model of higher education. The first is habituation to and adoption of this discourse by those who position themselves as 'critics'. Analysing documents providing advice about the academic 'job market', Newfield shows that markets are presented as 'given' in their scope and structure, and as something to which 'responsible [PhD] programs must adapt' (*Unmaking* 147). Newfield argues that the profession itself has become habituated to the language we have analysed in the OCIS, because of what 'the culture wars taught again and again': that 'the market was to be adapted to, not to be criticized or changed' (149).¹⁴ In other words, at the very time of the rise of neoliberalism and managerial cultures in universities, many humanities academics have worked in ways that confirmed the neoliberal view that 'culture' is extraneous to debates about policy, and commensurately, that humanities study cannot prepare students to participate in a 'real world'. Although 'human capital' modes of organisational functionality or economic behaviour are debated *within* economics—which does not take neoliberalism for granted¹⁵—the internal discourse of the humanities appears to accept the inevitability of the very language of neoliberalism.

While a lack of context is, as we have shown, one of the key problems of the OCIS, it also emerges in the literature of critique of neoliberalism. Newfield emphasises the fallacy of imagining an ideal past as a benchmark against which to measure the rightness of forms of education. In historical terms, the period from the mid 1950s to the mid 1980s, which serves as a reference point for many in the academic workforce, is actually unique, one in which baby boomer elites (members of the 5 to 10 per cent of the population then receiving a tertiary education) could progress quickly into the academy (as part of a rapidly expanding academic workforce), teach small numbers of students whose choice of subjects and courses did not *need* to be 'vocational' because of proliferating job opportunities in government and service industries, and on whom pressure to conduct research was often minimal. That these conditions have come to seem normative, in a period of unprecedented participation levels and diminishing budgets, has created a volatile mix of expectation and impossibility. But senior academics are not alone in projecting an unrealistic and idealised vision of higher education. Marginson notes, 'In policy circles everywhere, idealised templates of the Ivy League private university and the customer-focused commercial provider have an unprecedented sway' ('Global' 14).¹⁶ As long-time researcher into higher education Martin Trow remarked in 2006, 'No society, no matter how rich, can afford a system of higher education for 20 per cent or 30 per cent or 40 per cent of the relevant age group at the costs of the elite higher education that it formerly provided 5 per cent of the population' (qtd in Palfreyman 108).

The collective denial about university capacities has produced a situation where those employed in universities are locked in opposition, as individuals work within, for and against the shifting tides of change on specific issues. On one side, senior

management seem to feel heroic (but unappreciated by ignorant colleagues) in trying to provide sufficient resources in a straitened economic environment; on the other, academics seem to feel heroic (but unappreciated by ignorant colleagues) in trying to maintain forms of pedagogy commensurate with a system that educates an elite. The government, for its part, appears sick of hearing complaints from a group that they see as locked in an ivory tower, protected from 'competition'. In this context—and while many academics refuse to acknowledge the existence of economic constraints on higher education—when they do suggest ways of cutting costs, these are not taken seriously, not least because quality assurance regimes and institutional rankings demand the maintenance of certain kinds of behaviour. For instance, because the generation of research income has become a powerful marker of prestige, academics and institutions have a vested interest in inflating costs, with a commensurate distortion of research agendas and practices (see Goldsworthy 22). A shared investment in refusing to admit decline, inflating costs of irrelevant and unproductive activities, and ramping up regulation and costs of compliance (see Aspromourgos) is producing an increasing gap between rhetoric and reality within and about universities, and commensurately, rapidly diminishing levels of credibility. Coming back to the example of the OCIS, the inevitable decline in teaching and research capacity (commensurate with sacking 41 academics) is nowhere frankly admitted. Radical changes at the level of policy, and setting of priorities and processes, in higher education are required. We need to decide what is possible with current and future funding models, and stop pretending that the Australian system—at least for the humanities—is not so much 'world class' as at breaking point, showing the strain of trying to do too many things with too few resources. It is vital that we make this argument collectively. Rather than academics and senior managers allowing the system to place them on opposite sides—from which academics attribute all problems to the 'managerial barbarians' at the gate, and managers attribute all problems to the self-centred and irresponsible attitudes of academics—we need to see ourselves as working towards the same goal—after deciding what that goal should be.

Katherine Bode is head of the Digital Humanities Hub at the Australian National University, where she teaches digital humanities and literary studies. Her latest monograph, Reading by Numbers: Recalibrating the Literary Field (Anthem Press, 2012), explores the critical potential of quantitative approaches to literary and book history.

Leigh Dale teaches English at the University of Wollongong, where she is head of the School of English Literatures and Philosophy. Her research areas are the history of the discipline of English; representations of self-harm in academic and creative texts; and Australian literature.

[^top^](#)

Notes

- 1** Anthony Welch claims that in recent years, 'criticisms have become more vocal of a growing culture of entrepreneurialism in Australian higher education, most notably in relation to the recruitment and teaching of fee-paying international students' (297, referencing Altbach and Welch).
- 2** The list of references is long: in brief, Parker and Jary give a useful overview of the situation in the UK up until 1995; Amy Scott Metcalfe revisits Slaughter and Leslie's comparative study *Academic Capitalism* and finds that Canada is no longer the exception to the neoliberal rule, providing a rich set of references to this field in the process; Gaye Tuchman offers a close description and analysis of an American public institution in *Wannabe U*; Christopher Newfield historicises the relationship between the corporate world and higher education in the United States in *Ivy and Industry* and *Unmaking the Public University*; Frank Donohue offers an incisive critique of the situation of the humanities, in particular, in *The Last Professors*; Tony Aspromourgos offers an intelligent discussion of attempts to measure 'academic work' from the perspective of an economist. Several other works are more anecdotal than analytical (Hills' *Whackademia*, for example), while Michael Pusey has long documented the broader cultural changes of which shifts in academia are an important part (*Economic Experience*).
- 3** A lucid and lacerating analysis of the term 'transformation' is offered in Tuchman's *Wannabe U* (4-7); she argues, not without some irony, that attempting 'the transformation of a university is ... a complex and daring endeavour' (7).

- 4 Along with liberal smatterings of 'best practice', 'synergies' and 'market intelligence', we are informed that 'The proposal is seeking sustainable and operational efficiencies by ensuring that the organisational structure is ... value adding to the process with continual and flexible process improvement' (34).
- 5 As Marginson baldly puts it in his review of Ellen Hazelkorn's *Rankings and the Reshaping of Higher Education*, rankings 'position universities, and so structure human lives' ('Review' 557).
- 6 There were some significant changes in the final proposal: the number of staff positions to be cut was reduced from 45 to 41; the number of programs and subject areas to be closed was also reduced. We should note that, in addition to making draft and final documents available on the web, La Trobe released a document summarising some very critical feedback from postgraduate and undergraduate students. As yet, there has been no summary of staff responses, although some of the alterations between the draft and final OCIS are identified as responses to this feedback.
- 7 For discussion of this trend see Aspromourgos, 48.
- 8 The term 'legacy' is used in a pejorative sense to designate structures that belong in the past. The only similar usage we have found in our reading in the higher education literature is in the work of Geoff Sharrock.
- 9 The phrase also occurs in Adelaide University's discussion paper, 'Towards 2024'.
- 10 There is voluminous scholarship on this model, including Barr and Tagg, who mount a persuasive case against the close regulation of time and structure in effective teaching.
- 11 If calculating the capacity to attract students, Australian universities – especially those with a high rate of lower-socio-economic and regional students, such as La Trobe – might usefully replace the neoliberal term 'choice' with something as simple as 'capacity'. Evidence suggests that the student body is now splintered into those who want and are able to commit fully to their studies; those who are happy to expend minimum effort; and those who would like to commit more time and effort but are, for financial reasons, unable to do so. Of the latter, recent studies suggest that 70 per cent of tertiary students are now in paid employment, up from 43 per cent in 1994; one recent study proposes that 53 per cent of students in rural and regional areas feel that their paid work has interfered with their capacity to study (Robbins 107; 112). These findings indicate that decisions to access higher education might be better understood as an effect of capacity, rather than through the individualised neoliberal framework of 'choice'.
- 12 No rationalisation of Faculty governance is proposed; rather, the Faculty retains eleven central committees for a significantly reduced number of staff; seemingly, these residual structures promote rather than inhibit accountability, flexibility and functionality.
- 13 This definition of productivity is offered on a website for business professionals (iSixSigma).
- 14 Even the most impassioned academic advocates of opposition to neoliberal managerial rhetoric are, it seems, habituated to this way of thinking. For example, Suzanne Ryan, while lamenting the transformation of academics into 'zombies' and the 'mania for market and money' in universities, claims the existence of 'natural markets for the development of research and teaching' (7), which give some disciplines advantages over other.
- 15 For example, the 'human growth' model of education, which is derided as old-fashioned, is a key element of perfectly respectable economic theory (see Quiggin).
- 16 Bill Lovegrove and John Clarke, offering a case study of the University of Southern Queensland, at least ask the question 'whether USQ's adoption of hardened business principles and its increased emphasis on such core business considerations as market position and level of student enrolments has lessened the university's commitment to meeting other aspects of its mission' (148).

Works Cited

'About La Trobe.' *La Trobe University*. 2012. <http://www.latrobe.edu.au/about/> Accessed 29 Aug. 2012.

Altbach, P., and A. Welch. 'The Perils of Commercialism: The Australian Case.' *International Higher Education* 62 (Winter 2010): 21-22.

Aspromourgos, Tony. 'The Managerialist University: An Economic Interpretation.' *Australian Universities' Review* 54.2 (2012): 50-60.

Association of Universities and Colleges of Canada. *Trends in Higher Education*. Volume 3: Finance. June 2008.
<http://www.educause.edu/library/resources/trends-higher-education-volume-3-finance> Accessed 6 Nov. 2012.

Barr, Robert B., and John Tagg. 'From Learning to Teaching: A New Paradigm for Undergraduate Education.' *Change* 27.6 (November/December 1995): 13-25.

Cooper, Adam, and Benjamin Preiss. 'Vice Chancellor Flees Rally.' *The Age*, 27 August 2012.
<http://www.theage.com.au/victoria/vicechancellor-flees-rally-20120826-24uj6.html> Accessed 26 Sep. 2012.

Cunningham, Stuart. 'Oh, the Humanities! Australia's Innovation System out of Kilter.' *Australian Universities' Review* 49.1-2 (2007): 28-30.

Damrosch, David. *We Scholars: Changing the Culture of the University*. Cambridge, M.A.: Harvard UP, 1995.

Davies, Julie, and Edward Harcourt. 'No Shonky, Cappuccino Courses Here, Mate. UK Perspectives on Australian Higher Education.' *Perspectives: Policy and Practice in Higher Education* 11.4 (2007): 116-22.

Donohue, Frank. *The Last Professors: The Corporate University and the Fate of the Humanities*. New York: Fordham UP, 2008.

Frankfurt, Harry G. *On Bullshit*. Princeton: Princeton UP, 2005.

Gillies, D. 'Agile Bodies: A New Imperative in Neoliberal Governance.' *Journal of Education Policy* 26.2 (2011): 207-23.

Goldsworthy, Jeffrey. 'Research Grant Mania.' *Australian Universities' Review* 50.2 (2008): 17-24.

Hils, Richard. *Whackademia: An Insider's Account of the Troubled University*. Kensington: UNSWP, 2012.

iSixSigma. 'Productivity Target'. iSixSigma, 2000-2012. <http://www.isixsigma.com/dictionary/productivity-target/>
Accessed 19 Sep. 2012.

Jarwal, Som D., Andrew M. Brion, and Maxwell L. King. 'Measuring Research Quality Using the Journal Impact Factor, Citation and "Ranked Journal": Blunt Instruments or Inspired Metrics?' *Journal of Higher Education Policy and Management* 31.4 (2009): 289-300.

Laudel, Grit. 'The "Quality Myth": Promoting and Hindering Conditions for Acquiring Research Funds.' *Higher Education* 52 (2006): 375-403.

Levin, John S. 'Short-changed: The Plight of U.S. Universities in the Age of Economic Instability, or, Around the Bend: The University of California in the Present Age.' *Australian Universities' Review* 52.2 (2010): 56-63.

Lorenz, Chris. 'If You're So Smart, Why Are You under Surveillance? Universities, Neoliberalism, and New Public Management.' *Critical Inquiry* 38.3 (2012): 599-629.

Lovegrove, Bill, and John Clarke. 'The Dilemma of the Modern University in Balancing Competitive Agendas: The USQ Experience.' *Higher Education Management and Policy* 20.2 (2008): 139-49.

Marginson, Simon. 'Global Position and Position Taking: The Case of Australia.' *Journal of Studies in International Education* 11.5 (2007): 5-32.

—. Review of *Rankings and the Reshaping of Higher Education: The Battle for World-Class Excellence*, by Ellen Hazelkorn. *Journal of Higher Education Policy and Management* 34.5 (2012): 557-60.

Metcalfe, Amy Scott. 'Revisiting Academic Capitalism in Canada: No Longer the Exception.' *Journal of Higher Education* 81.4 (2010): 489-515.

Miller, Peter, and Ted O'Leary. 'Governing the Calculable Person.' *Accounting as Social and Institutional Practice*. Ed. Anthony G. Hopwood and Peter Miller. Cambridge Studies in Management. Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1994. 98-111.

Murray, Tim. 'No "barbarians", just faculty fine tuning.' *The Age*, 17 July 2012.

<http://www.theage.com.au/national/education/no-barbarians-just-faculty-finetuning-20120716-2262q.html>

Accessed 26 Sep. 2012.

Newfield, Christopher. *Ivy and Industry: Business and the Making of the American University, 1880-1980*. Durham: Duke UP, 2003.

—. *Unmaking the Public University: The Forty-year Assault on the Middle Class*. Cambridge and London: Harvard UP, 2008.

'Organisational Change Impact Statement (OCIS) for the Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences'. *La Trobe University*. August 2012. http://www.latrobe.edu.au/__data/assets/pdf_file/0017/203822/HuSS-OCIS-10-August-2012-FINAL.pdf Accessed 10 Aug. 2012.

Palfreyman, David. 'Martin Trow: Twentieth-Century Higher Education: Elite to Mass to Universal.' *Perspectives: Policy and Practice in Higher Education* 15.3 (2011): 107-08.

Parker, Martin, and David Jary. 'The McUniversity: Organization, Management and Academic Subjectivity.' *Organization* 2 (1995): 319-38.

Preiss, Benjamin. 'Gender studies face axe at uni', *The Age*, 27 June 2012.

<http://www.theage.com.au/national/tertiary-education/gender-studies-face-axe-at-uni-20120626-210ka.html>

Accessed 26 Sep. 2012.

—. 'Oh the humanities: As the axe falls, students notch up their activism to a degree.' *The Age*, 15 September 2012.

<http://www.theage.com.au/victoria/oh-the-humanities-as-the-axe-falls-students-notch-up-their-activism-to-a-degree-20120914-25xo9.html> Accessed 26 Sep. 2012.

—. 'University cuts humanities jobs, courses.' *The Age*, 21 June 2012.

<http://www.theage.com.au/national/education/university-cuts-humanities-jobs-courses-20120620-20okr.html>

Accessed 26 Sep. 2012.

—. 'Protest at La Trobe', *The Age*, 12 August 2012. <http://www.theage.com.au/victoria/protest-at-la-trobe-20120812-242vn.html> Accessed 26 Sep. 2012.

Pusey, Michael. *Economic Rationalism in Canberra: A Nation-building State Changes its Mind*. Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1991.

—. *Experience of Middle Australia: The Dark Side of Economic Reform*. Port Melbourne: Cambridge UP, 2003.

Quiggin, John. 'Human Capital Theory and Education Policy in Australia.' *Australian Economic Review* 32.2 (1999): 130-44.

Robbins, W.M. 'Learning with Hard Labour: University Students as Workers.' *Australian Bulletin of Labour* 36.1 (2010): 103-20.

Ryan, Suzanne. 'Academic Zombies: A Failure of Resistance or a Means of Survival.' *Australian Universities Review* 54.2 (2012): 3-11.

Sennett, Richard. *The Culture of the New Capitalism*. New Haven and London: Yale UP, 2004.

Shah, Mahsood, Ione Lewis and Robert FitzGerald. 'The Renewal of Quality Assurance in Australian Higher Education: The Challenge of Balancing Academic Rigour, Equity and Quality Outcomes.' *Quality in Higher Education* 17.3 (2011): 265-78.

Shah, Mahsood, and Chenicheri Sid Nair. 'Renewing Quality Assurance at a Time of Turbulence.' *Perspectives: Policy and Practice in Higher Education* 15.3 (2011): 92-96.

Shah, Mahsood, Sid Nair and Mark Wilson. 'Quality Assurance in Australian Higher Education: Historical and Future Development.' *Asia Pacific Education Review* 12 (2001): 475-83.

Sharrock, Geoff. 'After Copernicus: Beyond the Crisis in Australian Universities.' *Australian Universities Review* 49.1-2 (2007): 2-15.

Slaughter, Sheila, and Gary Rhoades. *Academic Capitalism and the New Economy: Markets, State, and Higher Education*. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins UP, 2004.

'Statistical Profile.' *The University of Western Australia*. March 2007.

http://year2006.annualreport.publishing.uwa.edu.au/___data/page/107155/Financial_Statements.pdf Accessed 6 Nov. 2012

Stokes, Anthony, and Sarah Wright. 'Are University Students Paying Too Much for Their Education in Australia?' *Journal of Australian Political Economy* 65 (June 2010): 5-26.

'Towards 2024: Choices for the University of Adelaide.' *The University of Adelaide*. August 2012.

<https://www.adelaide.edu.au/VCO/towards2024/paper/discussion-paper-towards-2024.pdf> Accessed 19 Sep. 2012.

Tuchman, Gaye. *Wannabe U: Inside the Corporate University*. Chicago and London: U of Chicago P, 2009.

Walshe, Terry. 'Rewarding Excellence and Promoting Improvement in Higher Education Teaching in Australia.' *Journal of Higher Education Policy and Management* 30.3 (2008): 273-82.

Welch, Anthony. 'Opportunistic Entrepreneurialism and Internationalisation of Higher Education: Lessons from the Antipodes.' *Globalisation, Societies and Education* 10.3 (2012): 295-315.

Young, Suzanne, David Peetz and Magalie Marais. 'The Impact of Journal Ranking Fetishism on Australian Policy-related Research.' *Australian Universities' Review* 53.2 (2011): 77-87.

[^top^](#)



Please feel free to **contribute** to this discourse.

©Australian Humanities Review all rights reserved. ISSN: 1325 8338.

Editors: Monique Rooney & Russell Smith. Email: ahr@anu.edu.au.

AHR is published by the Association for the Study of Australian Literature (**ASAL**).

This issue has been published with the support of the School of Humanities at The Australian National University.

last updated: November 30, 2012