



April 26, 2016

Senator the Hon Simon Birmingham
PO Box 6100
Parliament House, Canberra ACT 2600

Dear Minister Birmingham,

I am writing on behalf of the Executive and Membership of the Australasian Society for Computers in Learning in Tertiary Education (ASCILITE), a not-for-profit professional association for which I have the privilege to be President. ASCILITE is a community for those engaged in the educational use of technologies in tertiary education. It currently has 517 individual members, 18 institutional members which collectively accounts for a further 238 individuals, these members draw from 14 countries and 101 institutions/organisations. ASCILITE is a globally recognised and professionally connected community of professionals and academics working in fields associated with enhancing learning and teaching through the pedagogical use of technologies. ASCILITE seeks to shape the future of tertiary education, particularly through enabling and sharing high quality research, innovation and evidence-based technology-enhanced practices in tertiary education. This endeavour has been well supported and advanced through funded grants and projects from the Office for Learning and Teaching (OLT), as well as its predecessors Australian Learning and Teaching Council (ALTC) and Carrick Institute for Learning and Teaching in Higher Education. The ensuing innovations and progress in technology-enhanced learning that has transpired across the sector as a result of these grants and projects has benefitted hundreds of thousands of students.

I am therefore expressing grave concerns with the imminent closure of the OLT on 30 June 2016 and the failure to date to move on the recommendation of Professor Ross Milbourne, whom you commissioned to conduct a Review of the OLT in late 2015, to establish a new National Institute for Learning and Teaching to support educational excellence. Also of concern is the void that will be left, with the closure of the OLT, in regard to enhancing higher education learning and teaching and supporting delivery and performance standards, for the benefit of students.

The inequity and negligence that the government would be endorsing committing \$1.1 billion into research and research infrastructure, to support an innovation agenda, while no investment is made into the education and capacity building of the next generation is abhorrent. The funding that the OLT and its former agencies have availed to progress higher education learning and teaching is exceptionally meagre, but has nonetheless yielded substantial gains on investment and significant advancements in the realisation of student learning, outcomes, achievements and experience.



If Australia is to continue to build its reputation as a world class education system, and compete globally for international students and revenue, the quality of higher education learning and teaching needs to progress to ensure contemporaneous significance. This requires an increase in the investment in quality learning and teaching not a reduction or retraction of funding and support, which is what the closure of the OLT and not funding a new institute will engender. The OLT and its predecessors have provided the organisational infrastructure, support and funding for initiatives that have elevated Australian higher education in the world rankings and afforded us international respect and standing. The closure of the OLT and no viable successor will have a profound impact on the standard and quality of Australian higher education, it will reduce our capacity for any future-focused strategic leadership in learning and teaching and it will compromise student learning outcomes – as suggested in the Milbourne recommendations for a new national Institute. We implore you Minister, to continue the much needed investment in Australia's future.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'D. Parrish', written over a light grey rectangular background.

Associate Professor Dominique Parrish
President, Australasian Society for Computers in Learning in Tertiary Education (ASCILITE)
On behalf of the ASCILITE Executive and Membership