



Dr Andre van Oudtshoorn

PBC Principal

20 May 2021

Mr Alistair Maclean

TEQSA CEO

Dear Mr Maclean,

Thank you for the opportunity to participate in this morning's TEQSA Fees and Charges Consultation meeting. It is always difficult to persuade people that paying extra fees is necessary, and I believe you did a good job. I am writing to you on behalf of Perth Bible College's Board of Management and would like to bring the following to your attention.

PBC has been operating since 1928 to provide quality theological education in Australia. In 2019's QILT Student Experience Survey, PBC students' feedback placed the college in top overall position for all Higher Education Providers, including public universities, in four out of six criteria. In 2020, we were placed in the fourth overall position.

PBC not only provides key vocational outcomes in the fields of Theology, Ministry, Chaplaincy, and Counselling, but also contributes significantly, directly, and indirectly, to the social capital of our nation.

- *Chaplains:* PBC graduates work as aged care chaplains with Bethany Aged Care, a major PBC stakeholder, assisting and caring for the vulnerable. PBC graduates work as school chaplains with YouthCARE, another major PBC stakeholder, in the school system, directly involved with those at risk, with learning or mental health difficulties, caring for those who are suffering from issues such as bullying or come from an unstable family and community backgrounds. PBC graduates are involved in Street Chaplaincy, working alongside the WA Police, assisting the homeless, drug and alcohol affected, those at risk on the street, through providing first aid, and safety and care for the needy in the night hot spots around Perth and regional WA.

- *Counsellors*: PBC graduates work professionally in areas of pastoral care, relational restoration, personal recovery, mental health, and a range of broader social services.
- *Pastors & Leaders*: PBC also educates pastors and leaders within the wider Christian community who not only lead churches and other associated organisations but lead thousands of volunteers in engaging with the social care needs of the wider community.

All of this is achieved without any direct institutional investment from the government other than the funds associated with student fees. Therefore, the contribution of the independent higher education sector per investment dollar is exceedingly high.

Given that PBC serves a niche market not sufficiently catered to by universities, our pool of potential students is comparatively small. At the moment, Perth Bible College is educating fewer than fifty EFTSL students. Our financial risk is offset by income from renting accommodation and donations from Christians who share our vision for theological education.

TEQSA's current cost recovery proposal for institutions with 500 or fewer students places disproportionate pressure on specialised institutions such as PBC who only carries a tenth of the proposed student number bracket.

As mentioned, the church and Christian organisations provide significant social capital to the nation and require strong, well-educated, theological leadership to serve the community well. Theological education is not essential, but research has shown that

[T]he proportion of theology graduates who enter church ministry generate church attendees which generate benefits through religious giving, religious volunteering, better health, and lower crime. Additional religious giving is estimated to be \$196 per attendee. This is based on Deloitte's estimates of the value of additional religious giving at \$142 million, divided by 726,600 religious transitioners.¹

Perth Bible College has provided and will continue to provide education of the highest standards to our Christian constituency. We trust that TEQSA, which has to deal with an extensive range of institutions of various sizes and financial resources, will consider the position of narrow-focused high quality institutions such as PBC.

Yours faithfully,



PBC Principal

¹ Oslington, P "The Economic Benefits of Australian Theological Education, in *Colloquium 51.2, 2020 p23*