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Productivity Commission studies the future of tertiary education

The Productivity Commission has released an issues paper calling for input on the future of tertiary education.

“The pursuit of knowledge and learning is of critical importance to any society,” said Murray Sherwin, Chair of the Productivity Commission.

“Tertiary education delivers a wide range of benefits for individuals and the community. People with higher qualifications are happier and healthier, they are more likely to vote and volunteer in their communities, and of course they have the opportunity to earn more over their lifetime.

“New Zealanders spend a lot of money on tertiary education – around \$5 billion each year, through their taxes and directly in tuition fees. So it’s worth taking the time to step back and consider how well tertiary providers are meeting the needs of learners and the community, and how well the system can adapt to pressures and changing demands.

“In some ways our tertiary education system has changed enormously over the last few decades. More New Zealanders engage in tertiary study, and they do so alongside people from around the world. Students carry a library around in their pocket. The diversity of course offerings is far richer than when I studied social science at the University of Waikato forty years ago. But in some other ways, such as the traditional lecture, the tertiary education system hasn’t changed in hundreds of years.

“The release of this issues paper is the first step in a year-long inquiry into how our tertiary education system can innovate to meet the needs of learners and the community in the future. This inquiry will look at where innovation does and doesn’t happen in tertiary education; why some parts of the system innovate more than others; and how the system overall could become more innovative to deliver better education outcomes.

“Our terms of reference ask us to investigate the opportunities offered by new technology and the other big trends in tertiary education, and consider how well tertiary providers can innovate to better deliver learning that meets the needs of students, employers, and the wider society.

“We want to hear from students, businesses, tertiary education providers and their staff about how the system is working and what the opportunities and barriers are to innovation that will deliver better outcomes.

“The inquiry will cover all parts of the tertiary education system, including industry training, universities, wānanga, institutes of technology and polytechnics, private training establishments, and foundation education.”

The Commission is seeking submissions from all interested parties, including tertiary institutions, students, businesses, iwi, and community representatives, and will conduct a broad consultation process to help inform and ground the Commission’s analysis. Submissions are due by 4 May, and the Commission’s final report to the Government is due on 28 February 2017.

New models of tertiary education: Issues paper is available from www.productivity.govt.nz/inquiry-content/tertiary-education

About the New Zealand Productivity Commission

The Commission – an independent Crown entity – was established in April 2011 and completes in-depth inquiry reports on topics selected by the Government, carries out productivity-related research, and promotes understanding of productivity issues.

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