State, Territory, Commonwealth and New Zealand Ministers with responsibility for Education, Employment, Training and Youth Affairs, met in Perth on 17 November 2005 for the 19th meeting of the Ministerial Council on Education, Employment, Training and Youth Affairs. The meeting was chaired by the Hon. Rod Welford, MLA, Minister for Education and the Arts, Queensland, who was the Deputy Chair of MCEETYA for 2005. The main outcomes of the meeting are summarised below.

International Education and Training

Ministers released the joint communiqué — Delivering First Class International Education and Training — on measures to uphold the quality of Australia’s international education, both within Australia and around the world. As a consequence of this joint communiqué, Ministers have agreed to the establishment of a working group under the Australian Education Systems Officials Committee (AESOC) to progress the development of a Transnational Quality Assurance Strategy to underpin Australia’s educational export industry.

National Protocols for Higher Education Approval Processes

Ministers agreed to a series of changes to be made to the National Protocols for Higher Education Approval Processes following extensive review and consultation. Work will now commence on drafting a new set of Protocols for final consideration by Ministers by mid-2006.

Agreements at the meeting related to amendment of the National Protocols to allow for non self-accrediting institutions to become self-accrediting; clarification of the requirements for overseas providers; and greater national consistency in application of the Protocols. Ministers also agreed to changes to the criteria that should define universities, both new and existing, especially in relation to their roles in teaching
and research. Ministers also asked that further work be done on the criteria under which self-accrediting specialist higher education institutions might be allowed to use a modified form of university title.

Proposals Arising from Consultations on Building Better Foundations

Responding to issues raised in the Australian Government’s consultations on the discussion document Building Better Foundations for Higher Education in Australia: A discussion about re-aligning Commonwealth – State responsibilities Ministers agreed to:

• examine options to achieve greater national consistency in application of the protocols for recognition of higher education providers and accreditation of higher education courses as a priority;

• conduct a review of the impact of the National Governance Protocols and scope for their enhancement, including examination of the need for stronger fiduciary responsibilities for members of governing councils;

• coordinate the sharing of information between jurisdictions on current legislative provisions affecting universities’ commercial operations and their effectiveness and develop a statement of best practice or model clauses to guide future legislative reform and changes to related arrangements (such as borrowing controls and audit) which individual jurisdictions could draw upon as their circumstances warrant.

Draft National Strategic Principles for Higher Education

The Australian Government Minister for Education, Science and Training will seek the views of State and Territory Ministers on the Draft National Strategic Principles for Higher Education and consult with them on development of mechanisms to be put in place ensuring the consideration of State and Territory views in any decisions made under the draft principles.

Skill Shortages and Workforce Planning

Council endorsed a cooperative bilateral partnership between the Australian Government and the States and Territories in higher education policy and planning. A formal bilateral consultative mechanism on workforce planning will be instituted covering areas where the State or Territory is the major employer and where there are critical skills shortages at both national and State and Territory level.
Teaching and Learning Performance Fund

Council endorsed a review of the funding allocation approach and methodology for the Teaching and Learning Performance Fund by the Australian Government Department of Education, Science and Training, in consultation with the States and Territories and the higher education sector.