

7

Goldring, Jackson and the fight for the future of international education

The mid-1980s saw the release of two reports that impacted the future of the overseas student subsidy scheme, and influenced the nature of international education in Australia. The first, the Goldring Report, came from the Committee of Review of Private Overseas Student Policy and was tabled in the Australian Parliament in June 1984. The report was titled *Mutual Advantage*. The second report was of the Jackson Review into Australian Overseas Aid Policy, also released in 1984. The two reports came to very different conclusions regarding the future of overseas students in Australia. Put simply, Goldring concluded that the overseas student subsidy system was beneficial to Australia's developing nation neighbours and should be retained. The Jackson Report concluded that the overseas student subsidy system should be removed, a scholarship program put in place for students from developing countries, and full fees expanded for the remaining overseas students.

This chapter diverts slightly from the themes of the previous and subsequent chapters in this book. In part this is because these two reports have proved so consequential to scholarships and international education in Australia, they needed to be addressed at length. However, these two reports also embodied different strands of thinking in political, bureaucratic and academic circles about the place of Australia as an aid donor and international education host nation. Both reports encouraged more consideration and emphasis be given to Pacific policy development, not just in relation to now independent

Papua New Guinea (PNG), but also due to the broader obligations the authors saw Australia as having to the Pacific region. Thus, the reports deserve additional scrutiny given the themes of this book. The reports marked a significant attempt to shift the focus of policymakers towards the South Pacific. They also clearly demonstrate the different ways in which scholarships can be understood and interpreted. Goldring and Jackson each formed their own views about the role that scholarships should play in Australia's foreign aid and foreign policy approach, and those views are clear in these reports.

Additionally, these two reports recommended comprehensive and substantial changes to the way in which international scholarships and international education were implemented in Australia. The reports gave the Hawke Government plans to fundamentally reshape the system. What this chapter shows is that that opportunity was not taken, and iterative change was preferred.

The Goldring Review was chaired by Professor John Goldring of Macquarie University, and determined that 'because of the considerable benefits flowing from the overseas student program and the means of the students to pay, there should be a substantial subsidy'.¹ The report highlighted the intangible nature of many of the benefits of the overseas student program, and was keen to see an *aid* stance taken when it came to international education.

The Jackson Review, however, took a more focused *trade* approach to international education, focused firmly on centring Australia's national interest in the aid program. The Jackson Report's recommendations for a more trade-focused approach were balanced by a significant scholarship program, which was not adopted in the implementation of the recommendations. The scholarship element of the Jackson Review has not been a part of standard recollections, which has led to most contemporary reflections on the Jackson Review noting it as recommending a full-fee model of international education. As this chapter demonstrates, this simplified understanding of the Jackson Review recommendations obscures the report's more nuanced view of international education, and scholarships in particular.

1 Howard Conkey, 'Australia Benefits from Taking Foreign Students', *The Canberra Times*, 7 June 1984.

These two reports had significantly different terms of reference and fields of view. International education was one area where they overlapped. This situation was created because international education was, in the mid-1980s, viewed as largely within the realm of aid and development assistance. Broad subsidies were considered 'aid' despite their lack of targeting, and an international education sector that imagined itself to be born of the Colombo Plan encouraged this perspective. So while the Goldring Report was commissioned to look at 'private' students, it quickly strayed into overseas students more broadly. And because Jackson was tasked with reviewing aid, overseas students fell naturally into his remit. Understanding why these reports had significantly different recommendations will be a key focus of this chapter. This is important because these two reports were part of a (still continuing) debate about the role of education and scholarships in Australia's foreign policy and foreign aid conversation.

In the end, a mix of the recommendations from both reports was adopted by the Hawke Government in the years following the tabling of these reports, in an iterative process. In the longer view, however, the recommendations of the Jackson Review dominated the policies implemented. The subsidy scheme had been capped at 13,000 students in 1984, and the Minister for Education, Senator Susan Ryan, made a statement in 1986 explaining the changes to the subsidy scheme over the coming years. In this press release it was noted that 'students from PNG and sovereign states of the South Pacific will continue to have the charge [the Overseas Student Charge, or OSC] paid on their behalf by the Australian Development Assistance Bureau (ADAB)'.² The reduction in subsidies was necessary, according to Minister Ryan, due to difficult budgetary pressures, but she also emphasised that 'the Australian Government appreciated the importance of the overseas student program to the Government's international education policy and foreign policy'.³ This press release could be read as a signal not just to potential overseas students considering coming to Australia for study, but also to a regional government which had become very reliant on the program to supplement their human resource development plans.

2 Susan Ryan, 'Changes to Overseas Student Arrangements', news release, 19 August 1986, parlinfo.aph.gov.au/parlInfo/download/media/pressrel/HPR09022017/upload_binary/HPR09022017.pdf;fileType=application%2Fpdf#search=%22media/pressrel/HPR09022017%22, accessed 22 July 2020.

3 Ryan, 'Changes to Overseas Student Arrangements', news release, 19 August 1986.

Nevertheless, subsidies continued into the late 1980s, and by 1988 93 per cent of Pacific students enrolled in formal courses in Australia were subsidised or fully sponsored.⁴ Students from the region, particularly South-East Asia and the South Pacific, studied in high schools, vocational colleges and universities. The cap on subsidies, and a slow increase in full-fee places did have some effect on overseas research students in particular, but foreign governments read the signals being sent by the Hawke Government and began to sponsor students to study at the research level.

This chapter outlines the reports of both the Goldring and Jackson Committees, and their recommendations. It also addresses the interdepartmental processes that were necessary given the conflicting recommendations of the two reports. Finally, this chapter also addresses the connections between the Goldring and Jackson reforms, and those implemented for domestic students at a similar time. These reforms, known as the Dawkins Reforms, introduced fees for domestic students in tertiary education for the first time since the Whitlam Government had abolished them in the early 1970s. While not acted on immediately, the reports did set the framework for the next important scholarship program established by the Australian Government, the Equity and Merit Scholarship Scheme, which is discussed in the next chapter. The Jackson Review is often considered a turning point in Australia's engagement with international education, the foundations on which the contemporary sector is based. The oversimplification of the two reports, and a tendency to view international education policy settings as separate from their domestic equivalents, is common to much of the literature about the history of international education in Australia. This chapter is an effort to re-examine the two reports and broader domestic reforms, to better understand their contribution to Australian Government development scholarships, especially scholarships and education aid targeted at the Pacific region.

4 Tupeni Baba, *The Business of Australian Aid: Education, Training and Development – The Marjorie Smart Lecture for 1989: Tupeni Baba; and a Summary of the Proceedings of a Subsequent Panel Discussion* Edited by D.R. Jones, V.L. Meek and J. Weeks, ed. David R Jones, V Lynn Meek, and J Weeks (Melbourne: St Hilda's College, University of Melbourne, 1989).

The Goldring Report

Professor John Goldring was commissioned by the Hawke Government in September 1983 to head a committee to undertake a review of the private overseas student policy. The report, *Mutual Advantage*, was released in March 1984. The review was commissioned for a number of reasons. David Lim, a political scientist and member of the Jackson Committee, wrote in 1989 that the report was needed because there were:

increasing difficulties with administering the program, the concern that the scheme might have severe adverse distributional effects in the sending countries, and the fear that foreign students might displace Australian students.⁵

The committee themselves noted that the ‘overseas student program has evolved in a piecemeal fashion over a number of decades and its present problems reflect that unplanned approach’.⁶

Goldring was a Professor of Law at Macquarie University, and had experience working at the University of Papua New Guinea in the early 1970s, where he served in the Faculty of Law from 1970 to 1972.⁷ Other committee members were all experienced and respected public servants, except for Frank Hambly, the long-serving Secretary of the Australian Vice-Chancellors’ Committee, who had worked with the AVCC since 1966. The other committee members were Charles Beltz, a senior bureaucrat representing the Department of Education and Youth Affairs, Peter Eyles, an experienced public servant representing the Department of Immigration and Ethnic Affairs and Gerry Nutter, who had served as Australian High Commissioner to PNG from 1978 to 1981, representing the Department of Foreign Affairs. The secretariat for the committee was drawn from the departments represented on the committee.⁸ The committee’s experience and understanding of PNG is of note.

5 David Lim, ‘Jackson and the Overseas Students’, *Australian Journal of Education* 33, no. 1 (1989): 3, doi.org/10.1177/000494418903300101.

6 John Goldring, *Mutual Advantage* (Canberra: Australian Government Publishing Service, 1984), 27.

7 David Weisbrot, ‘In Memoriam: Judge John Goldring (1943–2009)’, *Australian Law Reform Commission Reform Journal* 63, no. 94 (2009): 63–64.

8 Goldring, *Mutual Advantage*.

The committee's report summary clearly outlined some of the issues faced when it commenced the work of meeting the terms of reference, that is, a Review of Private Overseas Student Policy (my emphasis). The committee broadened its scope after it decided that the 'distinction between private overseas students and overseas students sponsored by the Australian Government under its aid program, was in some respects artificial' and was thus granted permission to expand the review to 'overseas students generally'.⁹ Another challenging element noted by the committee was the lack of research available in Australia relating to overseas students. Due to this impediment the committee commissioned its own research, including a survey of overseas students in Australia, an Information Paper (October 1983) and an Issues Paper (December 1983); the latter provided a useful snapshot of the overseas student community in Australia at the time. For example, the committee found that in 1983 there were approximately 3,600 ADAB-sponsored students in the country, 4 per cent of the total number of privately funded students were Fijian, and 2 per cent were from PNG.¹⁰ The survey also yielded valuable contextual information, for example: 'most students come from families which, by Australian standards, are not wealthy, and most have parents with relatively low levels of educational achievement' and 'wealthier students tend to come from the poorer countries'.¹¹

Crucially, the Goldring Report made a series of recommendations that argued against a move to a cost-recovery basis for overseas students (the introduction of full fees), instead encouraging the Hawke Government to stick with an Overseas Students Charge. It also outlined a clear objective for Australia's future policy on overseas students to:

1. contribute to the social and economic development of people and institutions in developing countries, and especially those in the Asian and Pacific region, by granting them access to Australia's educational and training resources
2. increase cultural exchange and to improve the quality of Australia's educational and training resources
3. serve Australia's interests by improving communication with and understanding of Australia.¹²

9 Goldring, *Mutual Advantage*, 3.

10 Goldring, *Mutual Advantage*, 368.

11 Goldring, *Mutual Advantage*, 4.

12 Goldring, *Mutual Advantage*, 9.

This framing, which was consistent throughout the report, viewed Australia's acceptance of overseas students as a program of development assistance and foreign policy. It also highlighted the presence of overseas students in Australian universities as a crucial element of the education system. The report suggested that the 'overseas student program should be an integral part of Australia's education policy.'¹³

The report also recommended that the Overseas Student Charge (OSC) should continue to be waived for students from PNG and the South Pacific. Goldring recognised this specific subsidy as an element of Australia's aid program, but also saw the broader subsidy scheme as a form of aid. The report recommended that in future budgets, 'specific appropriations should also recognise the subsidy provided to overseas students, and the overwhelming part of this appropriation could be recognised as official aid'.¹⁴ This recommendation highlighted one of the key criticisms of the existing subsidy scheme, that many of those individuals or nations being supported by the subsidies were not considered countries worthy of the aid because the subsidy scheme did not discriminate on the basis of need.

Another key recommendation of the Goldring Report was for the introduction of an Australian Council for Overseas Students. The council, as proposed, was to consist of approximately nine or 10 members who had been appointed by the Minister for Education and Youth Affairs. It was proposed that the council would have representatives from tertiary and secondary education, students and 'a person to reflect the interests of overseas countries', among others.¹⁵ Goldring imagined that this council would set the level of the OSC, and an Overseas Student Office would be established to address issues of administration, policy, liaison and student monitoring. At the time these roles were spread across ADAB, various other government departments and the Coordinating Committees and Councils for Overseas Students that had been established when large numbers of overseas students first began coming to Australia in the 1950s. Goldring's vision laid out a 'one stop shop' for overseas student issues, policies, administration and activities that would deal with both sponsored and private students. ADAB was not entirely happy with this proposal, as many of the small scholarship programs under their management were tied closely to specific country programs within the aid budget. In one document that

13 Goldring, *Mutual Advantage*, 5.

14 Goldring, *Mutual Advantage*, 6.

15 Goldring, *Mutual Advantage*, 15.

was prepared to compare the Goldring and Jackson reports the ADAB position is stated thus: 'ADAB must continue to administer [scholarship programs] in accordance with the development assistance function of sponsoring developing country students'.¹⁶

The report was optimistic about the positive role the Australian Government could play in the development of South-East Asia and the Pacific through education. This reflected the timing of the report, commissioned as it was by the relatively newly elected Hawke Government, who had come to government with a positive mandate about Australia's role in overseas aid and development. It also reflected the submissions that the committee received, focused as so many were on the importance of the welfare of students and the value of the presence of overseas students to Australia and Australians. Goldring and Nutter both had experience in PNG and had undoubtedly come across many alumni of Australian education during their time there. This provided them with an opportunity to see the tangible outcomes of the policies being reviewed by the committee. The report was centred on the student, their needs and the needs of their countries. In this way it was politically naive, which ensured the recommendations failed to garner broad political support.

As mentioned previously, *Mutual Advantage* was also overshadowed because of the release of the Jackson Review of Overseas Aid. There was significant crossover on the subject of private and sponsored overseas students, therefore decisions on policies for overseas students had to be made using both the Jackson and Goldring reports. This process of synthesis is discussed later in this chapter.

In submissions made to the Overseas Student Task Force (described in detail shortly) that was formed to develop a coherent overseas student policy out of the Jackson and Goldring reports, the recommendations of Goldring were more popular. For example, a document titled *Ministerial Representations on Issues Raised by the Jackson and Goldring Reports* summarised 11 responses and representations received by the minister. Only one representation was unequivocal in its support of the recommendations of the Jackson Report whereas many supported the welfare recommendations of the Goldring Report.¹⁷ The Goldring Committee worked much more closely with those

16 'The Overseas Student Program – The Jackson and Goldring Reports (ADAB Regional Directors)', B848, V1984/82, 1984, National Archives of Australia (NAA).

17 'Ministerial Representations on Issues Raised by the Jackson and Goldring Reports | 17 August', A4250, 1984/1860, 1984, NAA.

involved with overseas students: 55 recommendations of the report were in line with the status quo. This was a more comfortable position for organisations and institutions not keen to make big changes, which was reflected in their submissions to the task force. Many of these organisations also noted that, by contrast, the Jackson Review Committee did not engage with them, and the Jackson Report made a number of incorrect assumptions about the existing overseas student policy that was in place at the time.

The Jackson Report

The Jackson Report was commissioned in 1982 by the Fraser Government, and like the Goldring Report was handed to the Hawke Government in March 1984, and tabled in Parliament in June 1984. The review was ordered after the Auditor General's Office released a critical report on Australia's aid administration.¹⁸ Sir Gordon Jackson, a well-respected businessman with an international focus was appointed by the Australian Government to review the entire overseas aid program.¹⁹ Jackson began his career with the Colonial Sugar Refining Company (later CSR Limited), and by 1984 had retired from his position as chief executive officer and was serving as deputy chairman. CSR had held a monopoly on sugar production in Fiji until the 1970s, and played a significant role in the exploitation of resources in the Pacific over the twentieth century. Jackson was influential in CSR's move into mining and construction. He was a member of Australia's first trade mission to the People's Republic of China, under Whitlam in 1973, and had advised Whitlam's government on foreign ownership of Australian companies.²⁰ He had experience running a committee for government, and had extensive experience in international trade, manufacturing and extractive industries. Because of the sectors that CSR was involved in, he had business experience in many of the nations to which Australia was giving aid, which significantly colours the report's recommendations.

18 Philip Eldridge, 'The Jackson Report on Australia's Overseas Aid Program: Political Options and Prospects', *Australian Outlook* 39, no. 1 (1985): 23–32, doi.org/10.1080/10357718508444868.

19 The remit for the Jackson Review was far broader than the Goldring Review and addressed the whole of the aid program, not only education aid and scholarships.

20 David Lee, 'Jackson, Sir Ronald Gordon (1924–1991)', in *Australian Dictionary of Biography* (Canberra: National Centre of Biography, Australian National University, 2016), adb.anu.edu.au/biography/jackson-sir-ronald-gordon-23122, accessed 19 April 2023.

The general tone of the report can be seen in the first pages:

Aid is given primarily for humanitarian reasons to alleviate poverty through economic and social development. It is the response of the wealthy industrial countries to the needs of hundreds of millions of people who live harsh and materially meagre lives. Aid also complements strategic, economic and foreign policy interests, and by helping developing countries to grow, it provides economic opportunities for Australia.²¹

The committee's report touched lightly on different theories of development and what the purposes of government aid should be, deciding that 'in the main, Australian Government aid funds and skills are most effective when applied to removing major constraints to development'.²² The report also noted the significant proportion of Australia's aid budget that was directed to PNG, at the time of the report it was 36 per cent of the total aid budget.²³ The report criticised the ad hoc nature of Australian aid, and the spread of the program across too many countries (more than 100). Jackson advised that country programs should lead aid allocation. In terms of the geographic allocation, the Jackson Report was clear that 'Australia's geopolitical interests and special relationships with PNG indicate that the main country focus should be on PNG and the small island nations of the Pacific and Indian Oceans'.²⁴ The report elaborated a little on Australia's 'special relationship' with PNG, and the 'shortcomings in Australia's preparation for Papua New Guinea's independence'²⁵ and summarised the history of Australia's colonial involvement in PNG. Similarly, the report noted that Australia has 'special responsibilities and interests in the South Pacific'²⁶ and was somewhat critical of previous colonial administrations, 'the colonial powers did little to train the island people',²⁷ but did not substantively engage with the ongoing impacts of colonisation on the South Pacific Island states. The report was, however, very clear on the importance (to Australia) of Australia's relationship with the South Pacific states:

21 R Gordon Jackson, *Report of the Committee to Review the Australian Overseas Aid Program*, Parliamentary Paper No. 206 of 1984 (Canberra: Australian Government Publishing Service, 1984), 3.

22 Jackson, *Report of the Committee*, 4.

23 Jackson, *Report of the Committee*, 5.

24 Jackson, *Report of the Committee*, 6.

25 Jackson, *Report of the Committee*, 7.

26 Jackson, *Report of the Committee*, 8.

27 Jackson, *Report of the Committee*, 174.

Australia's international credibility ... rests on its ability to be involved in and to understand the region and to have influence with island states on matters of regional and international concern such as de-colonisation and nuclear testing.²⁸

Passages such as this in the report demonstrated its position as a pragmatic document, encouraging the giving of aid that leads to a benefit to Australia. The report covered a broad program of aid, outlining the current programs of aid in each area addressed, as well as looking into the activities of other donors. Given the breadth of the review, while the report did engage with debates about aid and development, it could only do so at a superficial level. For some observers, this was problematic. Agricultural economist WR Stent, in a speech in June 1984 at a seminar organised by Community Aid Abroad, expressed his concern that the report would become an authoritative text even though, as he stated 'the Report is never able to come to grips with what development is'.²⁹ In short, the report failed to grapple with development from a theoretical or practical perspective, other than as a part of Australia's foreign policy outlook. Philip Eldridge described Jackson's 'triple mandate' as balancing equally strategic, economic and humanitarian interests.³⁰ This was not necessarily a radical change from the way in which aid and development had been practised by the Australian Government over the previous decades, but it was certainly far more explicitly stated in the Jackson Report than it had been previously. It was also starkly different from the perspective taken in the Goldring Report, wherein supporting developing countries was considered a responsibility.

In terms of tertiary education, the report noted:

the Committee found that developing countries have a high regard for many aspects of Australian education, but that Australia is missing out on some of the best overseas students because university and immigration procedures are overly bureaucratic.³¹

28 Jackson, *Report of the Committee*, 177.

29 WR Stent, 'Comments on Jackson Committee Report', A4250, 1984/2194, 1984, NAA.

30 Philip J Eldridge, *The Politics of Human Rights in Southeast Asia*, Politics in Asia Series (Routledge, 2002).

31 Jackson, *Report of the Committee*, 10.

This focus on high-calibre students hinted at Jackson's contention that Australia should benefit from overseas students in the country. This further fuelled the critique that the committee's recommendations were more focused on benefits to Australia than the potential benefits overseas students could enjoy through their study in Australia.

The Jackson Report also explicitly called for the 'hidden subsidy' funding to be counted as Overseas Development Assistance (ODA), noting that this would 'raise official aid as a share of GNP by about 0.04%'.³² In the context of a goal of ODA to be equal to 0.7 per cent of GNP, this was not an inconsequential increase. The Director-General of ADAB, Bob Dun, agreed with this approach, and wrote to Foreign Minister Hayden in June 1986 asking that he request the subsidy contribution be made explicit in financial documentation, in part because this 'fix' allowed for Australia to demonstrate a greater commitment to aid funding at the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD).³³

The report was very explicit about one of the key concerns around the existing scholarship scheme that was troubling scholarship and aid administrators. It noted that students from developing countries

must be approved by their own government and are often selected on grounds other than academic merit. The criteria of the more influential government departments in developing countries tend to prevail.³⁴

This sentence, tucked away in the report, called attention to a significant issue in the selection of students for scholarships funded by the Australian Government. Scholarship administrators suspected that favouritism and nepotism played a part in the awarding of scholarships. This issue was critically important to the designers of the next significant Australian Government development scholarship, the Equity and Merit Scholarship Scheme (discussed in the next chapter), who were very keen to avoid nepotism and favouritism in selection of scholarship awardees.

32 Jackson, *Report of the Committee*, 94.

33 The timing of this was especially useful to coincide with a visit to the OECD by an Australian representative – Mr Corkery. RB Dun, 'The Hidden Subsidy in Education in Australia of Overseas Students: Counting as ODA | Note for Minister Hayden | 5 June', A4250, 1984/1427, 1984, NAA.

34 Jackson, *Report of the Committee*, 92.

The report did recommend a scholarship program, to 'improve the balance of student intake and offset rising charges'³⁵. The three-tiered scholarship program was substantial. Committee member and academic David Lim explained that:

The first tier is the existing Australian government-to-government sponsorship scheme, which should be retained at the current level. The geographical distribution of these scholarships should be in line with that recommended for other bilateral aid programs. However, the adoption of country programming will help to improve the coherence of the disciplinary mix of the scholarships. The second tier is the provision of merit scholarships, to be awarded directly by Australian tertiary institutions. Students would be selected entirely on merit, unlike those in the first category who have to be approved by their own governments and who may have been selected on non-academic grounds. To ensure that these scholarships have an impact on economic development generally, they should be offered in areas where Australia has a competitive advantage and to the poorer of the targeted aid recipient LDCs [Least Developed Countries]. Special scholarships for students from disadvantaged groups in LDCs would form the third category of scholarships.³⁶

The plan for scholarships was for the government to move to a target of 10,000 scholarships by the mid-1990s, a massive increase in the number of scholarships available at that time.³⁷ If there were students who were unable to gain one of the 10,000 scholarships available, then under the Jackson plan they were to apply to study in Australian institutions based on available places and pay a full fee to that institution. The committee's report also recommended that the administration of overseas students, both their placement and support in Australia, should be handled by education institutions, rather than ADAB and other volunteer organisations, as was the practice at the time.

The comments by Lim, going into depth about the scholarship program proposed by the Jackson Committee, were published in 1989, well after decisions about the recommendations of the Jackson Report had been translated into policy. He was, perhaps, responding to an observation made that it was the Jackson Report that reoriented Australia's overseas student policies from aid to trade. As will be made clear in subsequent chapters, at

35 Jackson, *Report of the Committee*, 11.

36 Lim, 'Jackson and the Overseas Students', 9.

37 Lim, 'Jackson and the Overseas Students', 9.

no point did the planned 10,000 award scholarship scheme come into being, whereas the market-oriented export approach to international education became a mainstay of Australia's tertiary education sector.

The Committee of Review consulted widely, although, as mentioned earlier many involved in the overseas students sector felt ignored by the report. The report recommended that Australia's aid program be allowed to mature, and:

[the] Jackson Committee accepted that in Australia, as in other donor countries, there is more than one mandate for giving aid for development. It also recognised that the humanitarian, political and economic mandates can give rise to quite different groups of LDCs being helped.³⁸

This is the triple mandate as discussed earlier.

After the report was tabled it received coverage in many newspapers across Australia and the world.³⁹ There was a recognition that Australia's responsibilities to different countries came from our historical and geographical connections to those nations, an article in the PNG newspaper *Niugini Nius* reported that Jackson 'harshly criticises the management of the Australian aid programme to Papua New Guinea'.⁴⁰ Reporting also focused on Jackson's conclusions about the thin spread of Australian aid, and possible opportunities for education to become an export industry.⁴¹ An article by Niki Savva in *The Australian* focused on how the report recommended a reduction in aid to PNG, and framed the report as criticising Australia's present aid policies.⁴²

Many critics of the report disagreed with the strong focus on the growth model of development adopted by the committee, including a number of economists. According to Phillip Eldridge, the 'Jackson Report ignores the radical critique [of aid and development] entirely'.⁴³ It did not engage with the idea of a basic needs approach, or Marxist and structuralist discussions around aid and development. The Jackson Report safely resided in the theories of modernisation that dominated development practice

38 Lim, 'Jackson and the Overseas Students', 5.

39 See, among others, Stuart Inder, 'Fiji's Progress Praised', *The Fiji Times*, 9 June 1984, 3.

40 'Aussie Attack on Aid Misuse', *Niugini Nius*, 8 June 1984.

41 Patrick Walters, 'Australian Aid Spread Too Thinly, Report Says', *The Sydney Morning Herald*, 8 June 1984, 11.

42 Niki Savva, 'PNG Aid Should Be Cut, Jackson Tells Gov', *The Australian*, 8 June 1984.

43 Eldridge, 'The Jackson Report on Australia's Overseas Aid Program', 23.

in the 1980s. Other organisations were also dissatisfied with the report. In October 1984 Community Aid Abroad (CAA) reported that its position had ‘hardened’ following months of intensive analysis of the report. CAA’s main concern with the report was that ‘when they come into conflict, Australia’s self-interest must take priority over the needs of the poor’.⁴⁴

There were other broad critiques of the Jackson Review Committee’s report. The Fijian academic and politician Tupeni Baba believed that the ‘Jackson Committee saw aid largely in terms of furthering Australia’s interests’.⁴⁵ Historian Elizabeth Cassity noted that it was perceived as having a ‘neo-classical and authoritarian view of development’.⁴⁶ The focus on the potential of developing a full-fee overseas student market was often noted as one of the key elements of the report that elicited these critiques. But the report itself did not stress this element, especially as it called for a massive scholarship program.

While the committee had a broad scope – all of Australia’s overseas aid program – significant attention was paid to policies regarding overseas students, which by virtue of the OSC (and its waiving for students from PNG and the South Pacific) was part of the aid budget. This element featured in reporting in newspapers, including a report by Ian Davis in *The Age*:

Sir Gordon Jackson said yesterday that there should be ‘a lot more overseas students. The present student intake is neither big enough, nor balanced enough’. He said overseas students should not be considered part of Australia’s education policy, but rather as part of its foreign aid policy. They should be financed under the aid program and thus would not displace Australian students seeking places in universities and colleges.⁴⁷

This was a fascinating quote from Jackson, given that much of the critique of his proposals relating to overseas education was in opposition to the trade focus, preferring Goldring’s aid focus. It was also in direct contradiction to the call from Goldring to make overseas student policy an integral part of Australia’s education policy rather than a separate and distinct element.

44 ‘CAA Attitude Hardens’, *Community Aid Abroad Review*, October 1984.

45 Baba, *The Business of Australian Aid*, 8.

46 Elizabeth Cassity, ‘Cast the Net a Little Wider: Australian Aid in the South Pacific’, *International Journal of Educational Development* 28 (2008): 254, doi.org/10.1016/j.ijedudev.2006.12.003.

47 Ian Davis, ‘Report Seeks More Foreign Student Aid’, *The Age*, 8 June 1984.

Eldridge's critique of the recommendations, published in 1985, highlighted the difficulties of the scholarship proposal, particularly in relation to ideas around brain drain, with policies like 10,000 scholarships having the potential to embed 'biases against local training and research or collaboration with third countries'.⁴⁸ Eldridge noted that without clear equity criteria and with assumptions that the benefits of education to development materialise with the education itself, development outcomes might not be forthcoming.

ADAB itself was open to the scholarship concept. A paper prepared in March 1984 outlined a way of implementing the scholarship program. The plan involved the establishment of Australian Scholarship Advisory Committees in each recipient nation – committees that would be responsible for initial vetting of applications, and providing advice on placements. Responsibility for placements would be with the institutions, and as part of the plan outlined in this paper, Australian educational institutions would apply to be a part of the scholarship scheme. It was felt that this approach would 'encourage institutions to develop suitable courses/research degrees for developing country students'.⁴⁹

Overseas Students Task Force

As noted earlier in this chapter, the Goldring and Jackson reports released in 1984 overlapped in the key area of overseas students and education aid. This presented the Australian aid and education bureaucracy with the difficult task of synthesising and understanding the recommendations of two reports which suggested the Australian Government take very different approaches to the same issue.

In March 1984 the Director-General of ADAB, Bob Dun wrote to the Minister of Foreign Affairs, Bill Hayden, seeking his advice on how to reconcile the two reports for a Cabinet submission. The process was being hurried by the Department of Education and Youth Affairs, which was hoping to have new policies in place for the intake of overseas students

48 Eldridge, 'The Jackson Report on Australia's Overseas Aid Program', 25.

49 'Australian Overseas Student Scholarship Scheme Possible Method of Handling (within Jackson Committee Approach | 15 March', A4250, 1984/897, 1984, NAA.

in 1985. Dun saw this rush as unnecessary, especially because he saw the reports as having ‘important philosophical differences of approach which may not be fully reconcilable [his emphasis]’.⁵⁰

The efforts of the Department of Education for haste were not misplaced. The Australian High Commission in Fiji were inundated with enquiries in 1984, with over 1,000 would-be students approaching the High Commission in a three-day period in June 1984. There were only 225 places allocated to Fijian students for the 1985 academic year.⁵¹ The demand for access to Australian universities from Fiji, at least, was clear.

At the time the reports were released, ADAB had a significant role in managing the overseas student cohort (not only the sponsored students), after the reshuffle of responsibilities out of the review in 1977/78 discussed in the previous chapter. ADAB employed social workers who provided pastoral care for students, and also supported the Coordinating Committees for Overseas Students that had, since their establishment in the 1950s, coordinated support for overseas students from non-government and community organisations such as the Country Women’s Association, Rotary and Apex.

As the Goldring and Jackson reports were digested, Bob Dun asked his staff to consider the reports in conjunction with each other. A report of the ADAB Regional Directors provides an insight into the thinking of ADAB staff. The report was not complimentary of either Goldring or Jackson, concluding:

It is the considered view of the Regional Directors that neither the Jackson nor the Goldring Reports has produced satisfactory findings in relation to the Overseas Student Program.⁵²

This submission to ADAB senior leaders outlined the ways in which both committees had failed to understand the existing program, and how the administrative, welfare and foreign policy burden was shared. The Regional Directors were particularly scathing of the limited insight provided by the Jackson Report (which was tasked with a much greater remit than that of the Goldring Committee). They wrote:

50 RB Dun, ‘Overseas Students – Reconciliation of the Recommendations of the Goldring and Jackson Reports | March 1984’, A4250, 1984/897, 1984, NAA.

51 ‘Flood of Inquiries on Study in Australia’, *The Fiji Times*, 8 June 1984, 14.

52 ‘The Overseas Student Program – the Jackson and Goldring Reports (ADAB Regional Directors)’, B848, V1984/82, 1984, NAA.

The Jackson Report ... limits its findings on overseas students to a few broad and seemingly simple ideas. It does not go into detail or make any attempt to follow through the full administrative, financial, welfare or foreign and domestic political impact of its ideas.⁵³

The Regional Directors expressed concern about the manner in which the overseas student program was dealt with, either by the conflation of the sponsored and non-sponsored cohorts (Goldring Report) or to a greater split between them (the Jackson Report).

In order to deal with the difficulties posed by the two alternative policy proposals, outside of the ADAB internal considerations, an interdepartmental Overseas Student Task Force was convened. The decision to establish an Overseas Student Task Force was made at a special meeting of 'relevant' ministers held in May 1984 which involved the Minister for Foreign Affairs (Bill Hayden), the Minister for Education and Youth Affairs (Susan Ryan) and the Minister for Immigration and Ethnic Affairs (Stewart West). This meeting made a number of decisions outlining the scope of the task force, but also regarding future decision-making. Minister Hayden had requested that the Goldring and Jackson reports were to be considered together, thus it was accepted that any policy changes would be influenced by both reports. Reports of this meeting show that the 'ownership' of overseas student policy was contested. A meeting report summarising the decisions made noted that 'portfolio responsibility in the future for overseas student matters was a matter for the Prime Minister's prerogative under the administrative arrangements'.⁵⁴ ADAB staffers had discussed this issue prior to the meeting, and had agreed that, with the subsidy and increases recommended by Jackson equal to approximately 20 per cent of the total aid budget, the 'loss of policy control over so large a component of the aid program would be a very serious matter'.⁵⁵ Before the meeting a number of submissions and internal documents from ADAB and the Department of Foreign Affairs had noted the importance of overseas student policy to aid and diplomacy. Nevertheless, after this meeting Charles Terrell (First Secretary) wrote that Hayden:

53 'The Overseas Student Program – the Jackson and Goldring Reports (ADAB Regional Directors)', B848, V1984/82, 1984, NAA.

54 'Meeting of Ministers on the Jackson and Goldring Reports | 4 May', A4250, 1984/897, 1984, NAA.

55 'Overseas Student Policy: The Goldring and Jackson Reports, Briefing Note for Minister Hayden', A4250, 1984/1427, 1984, NAA.

Indicated that he felt that student matters should be the responsibility of the Education and Youth Affairs portfolio and I gained the impression that he would be glad to be rid of his present responsibility in regard to scholarship, etc. policy.⁵⁶

The bureaucrats of the Department of Foreign Affairs and ADAB were far more attached to the policy levers of overseas students and scholarships than their minister was, adding an additional layer of difficulty to the task force process.

The task force had representation from the Department of Prime Minister and Cabinet, the Department of Education and Youth Affairs, the Department of Foreign Affairs, the Department of Finance, the Treasury Department and the Department of Immigration and Ethnic Affairs.⁵⁷ While ADAB was able to provide advice to the task force, it was decided by the Department of Education and Youth Affairs, who chaired the task force, that only one representative of each portfolio was able to be a full member of the task force. This created special difficulties for ADAB and the Department of Foreign Affairs, who had different priorities and concerns related to the policy settings for overseas students. They sought advice from their minister, Bill Hayden, about the conflicts. The Department of Foreign Affairs was 'interested in a range of foreign policy implications of the overseas student program' whereas ADAB was 'interested in the implementation of the Jackson Report on the Aid Program'.⁵⁸ This conflict between Foreign Affairs and ADAB mirrored the internal conflicts within the scholarship programs and the broader overseas student policies. There were many foreign policy implications, and benefits, of scholarship programs. But they did not always sit comfortably with the development goals that those scholarship programs were created to address, or within the normal bureaucratic structures of the Commonwealth government.

The task force was given tight deadlines, with ministers asking for the Cabinet submission to be prepared by August 1984. Responsibility for policies in relation to the 1985 intake of overseas students had been given to the Department of Immigration and Ethnic Affairs, but there were pressures coming from other sources, such as a planned visit of the Prime Minister

56 'Meeting of Ministers on the Jackson and Goldring Reports | 4 May', A4250, 1984/897, 1984, NAA.

57 It is interesting to note that the ministers involved had asked in the meeting in May 1984 that Treasury was not to be involved in the Task Force.

58 PGF Henderson, 'Task Force on Overseas Students – Note to Mr Hayden | 6 July', A4250, 1984/1428, 1984, NAA.

of Malaysia, Dr Mahathir, in August 1984. Minutes from a meeting held in early July 1984 noted 'the importance of the overseas student issue in Australia's relations with Malaysia'.⁵⁹ Given the complicated policy that was being addressed these timelines were always unrealistic. In reality the policies in relation to overseas students were still being reformed and changed over subsequent years, and the scholarship program advocated by Jackson (in a significantly reduced form) was not announced until 1989.

The task force planned for its main output to be a Cabinet submission recommending the proposed policy approach for overseas students. Papers prepared for meetings of the task force, along with other internal ADAB briefings, made clear the difficulties that each of the reports raised. For example, the suggestion of transitioning to full-cost-recovery (rejected by Goldring and supported in part by Jackson) was also advised against by the Commonwealth Standing Committee on Student Mobility, which was a part of the Commonwealth Secretariat.⁶⁰ It was expected that if a Commonwealth country such as Australia did introduce a full-cost-recovery system, they would then be at a disadvantage in comparison to other countries such as Canada and the United Kingdom. How fees could be set, depending on the institution, was also up for discussion by the task force. There was an expectation that introducing full fees for overseas students would be negatively received by developing country governments. One paper noted that Malaysia in particular would be expected to react poorly 'because the effects of increased fees would be felt immediately, long before the scholarship program grew to the extent that it was a counteracting force'.⁶¹ Given that the survey conducted by Goldring had found that 50 per cent of overseas students in Australia were from Malaysia, the focus on the reception of the policy changes in Malaysia was critical.

Consultations around the two reports also included the Metropolitan Coordinating Committees, who were largely supportive of the recommendations in the Goldring Report, but scathing of the Jackson Report. A record of a meeting notes the group 'unanimously dismissed the directions for education advocated in the Jackson Report'.⁶² The Melbourne Council for Overseas Students (MELCOS) also wrote a submission on the Overseas Student Task Force, pointing out specific issues around welfare

59 'Meeting Minutes: Overseas Student Task Force | 2 July', A4250, 1984/897, 1984, NAA.

60 'Overseas Student Task Force – Papers for Meeting on 10 July 1984', A4250, 1984/897, 1984, NAA.

61 'Overseas Student Task Force – Papers for Meeting on 10 July 1984', A4250, 1984/897, 1984, NAA.

62 'Submission from Metropolitan Coordinating Committees, 18 August 1984', B848, V1984/93, NAA.

and fees for overseas students,⁶³ issues that MELCOS felt had not even been addressed by the Jackson Report. MELCOS also discussed at a meeting in July 1984 that it was resigned to full cost fees being introduced, in part because ‘Professor Goldring in conversation with Stephen Gan UNSW [University of New South Wales], reportedly stated that as the Jackson Committee’s “power base” was in Canberra it was in a strong position to lobby for its own recommendations’.⁶⁴ MELCOS was also aware that the Department of Education was looking to introduce fees for domestic students, making fees for overseas students inevitable.

The outcomes of the Jackson and Goldring reports are often oversimplified, particularly in the context of the history of Australia’s international education sector.⁶⁵ However, as files, briefings and the reports themselves make clear, the response to these reports was not a simple matter. The implementation fell short of what the Jackson Committee imagined. In the short term, the policy change more closely mirrored the Goldring recommendations. Lim wrote in 1989 that the new policy announced in 1985 ‘was a compromise between the Goldring and Jackson recommendations but more towards the former than the latter’.⁶⁶ The OSC was retained, although increased from 25 per cent of the cost of a tertiary place to 35 per cent and quotas were introduced at both the institutional level (the number of overseas students in each institution) and the national level (the number of overseas students from individual nations). Under these settings the number of subsidised students continued to grow: over twice as many subsidised overseas students were in Australia in 1986 as were in 1980.⁶⁷ In many ways the choice made by the Hawke Government in 1985 to only tinker with the status quo, and to continue with the OSC and subsidies, delayed more substantial reforms only for a few years. By 1988 the budget was being stretched by the attractiveness of the subsidy scheme to overseas students, and plans were

63 ‘Melbourne Council for Overseas Students – Submission to Overseas Student Task Force | 18 July’, A4250, 1984/1860, 1984, NAA.

64 ‘Melbourne Council for Overseas Students Committee of Presidents | Meeting Minutes | 12 July’, A4250, 1984/1941, 1984, NAA.

65 Much documented history of the Australian international education sector mentions the reports of 1984 in passing, concluding that the Jackson Report recommends a move of the overseas student program to a trade footing, rather than the aid footing recommended by Goldring. Examples include: Paula Dunstan, ‘Beyond the Campus: Students Engagement and Community Responses’, in *Making a Difference: Australian International Education*, ed. Dorothy Davis and Bruce Mackintosh (Sydney: UNSW Press, 2011); Anna Kent, ‘Australian Development Scholarships and their Place within Diplomacy, Development and Education’, Master’s thesis, University of Melbourne, 2012. This oversimplistic approach is notable given the discussions in this chapter, and other work such as Lim, ‘Jackson and the Overseas Students’.

66 Lim, ‘Jackson and the Overseas Students’, 13.

67 Lim, ‘Jackson and the Overseas Students’, 14.

put in place to bring the scheme to an end. It was at this point that the recommendations of Jackson came to influence the policies being designed and implemented.

Dawkins Reforms

There were also significant influences on policy development coming from domestic reforms. As the policies for overseas students were still being redesigned and reshaped (although at this point behind closed doors), the Hawke Government began what became known as the Dawkins Reforms. Precipitated by a 1987 Green Paper titled *Higher Education: A Policy Discussion Paper*, a White Paper was released by the Minister for Education John Dawkins. The process was aimed at addressing the ‘capacity and effectiveness of the higher education sector’.⁶⁸ The conditions that led to the call for reforms were similar to those that had led to the Goldring Report. Access to tertiary education was seen as vital (in the case of Goldring it was vital in a diplomatic and development sense), but it was becoming clear that the Hawke Government felt it could no longer afford to subsidise education at the level it did.⁶⁹ The reforms were also influenced by changes occurring in other parts of the world. Simon Marginson wrote that the policy conversation was ‘inspired by the neo-liberal “revolution” and policies of privatisation and deregulation set in train by the Thatcher government in the UK’.⁷⁰ The Higher Education Access Charge, a flat rate of \$250 per full-time domestic student, was introduced in 1986, and was followed in 1988 by the Higher Education Contribution Scheme (HECS).⁷¹ These changes, in many ways mirroring the OSC that had been increased earlier in the decade for overseas students, changed the settings around equity of access to higher education that had been key to the reforms made by the Whitlam Government in the 1970s. Marginson argues that it was these changes that led to the marketisation of higher education in Australia for Australian

68 Department of Education and Training, *Higher Education in Australia: A Review of Reviews from Dawkins to Today* (Canberra: Department of Education and Training, 2015), 11.

69 According to Elizabeth Humphrys, the abolition of free tertiary education for domestic students was in direct contravention of the ‘Accord’ struck by the Hawke Government shortly after the election of Bob Hawke as prime minister. This provides a potential explanation for the hesitation within the Hawke Government to remove the subsidy scheme as it would mark the beginning of a process that ended free tertiary education for both international and domestic students. See Elizabeth Humphrys, *How Labour Built Neoliberalism: Australia’s Accord, the Labour Movement and the Neoliberal Project* (Leiden, The Netherlands: Brill, 2018), doi.org/10.1163/9789004383463.

70 Simon Marginson, ‘National and Global Competition in Higher Education’, *The Australian Educational Researcher* 31, no. 2 (2004): 2, doi.org/10.1007/BF03249517.

71 Marginson, ‘National and Global Competition in Higher Education’.

students, in the same way that critics felt the policy settings recommended by Jackson would lead to the marketisation of higher education for overseas students.⁷²

These changes were not a surprise to the sector. As discussed earlier, the MELCOS Committee of Presidents noted in 1984, when the Jackson and Goldring reports were being synthesised, that the Department of Education and Youth Affairs was investigating the possibility of introducing fees for domestic students on a means-tested basis.⁷³

Fees were introduced for domestic students in 1988, albeit via the HECS program, which was an income-contingent loan. This created the politically unsustainable position whereby overseas students were able to access tertiary education in Australia with extremely low fees while domestic students were paying higher fees via the HECS program. Thus, despite the wishes of Goldring and his committee, more substantive changes to the policies relating to international students, and fees for study, were needed. Eugene Sebastian argued that one of the reasons overseas students were the constituency that suffered more acutely from the changes during this period was because there was little political organisation of overseas students prior to the 1980s.⁷⁴

By 1988 the end of the subsidy scheme was assured, and by 1990 it was over. Thousands of students from South-East Asia and the South Pacific, and even further afield, had made use of the subsidy scheme during the 16 years it was in place. At this time the demand for Australian education in the South Pacific was high, with applications far exceeding allocated places from some nations such as Fiji. The scheme also allowed other governments to sponsor their nationals to study in Australia, only having to pay a stipend or living costs. It was for this equity of access that Goldring supported the continuation of the scheme. But in the end the forces of neoliberalism and domestic financial pressures could not be resisted; the Jackson-influenced approach was more in line with the prevailing political and economic winds.⁷⁵

72 Marginson, 'National and Global Competition in Higher Education'.

73 'Melbourne Council for Overseas Students Committee of Presidents | Meeting Minutes | 12 July', A4250, 1984/1941, 1984, NAA.

74 Eugene F Sebastian, 'Protest from the Fringe: Overseas Students and their Influence on Australia's Export of Education Services Policy 1983–1996', PhD thesis, University of Sydney, 2009.

75 Marginson, 'National and Global Competition in Higher Education'.

In commissioning the Goldring Review of Overseas Students, and having it report at the same time as a report commissioned by the previous Fraser Government, the Hawke Government created unexpected complications for itself. Significant time and energy was spent by departments, charities, non-government organisations (NGOs) and other community groups in trying to interpret and understand the reports in tandem. The Goldring Report was more thoroughly embraced by NGOs, with Jackson's neoliberal tendencies putting many organisations, including CAA and MELCOS, offside.

As explained earlier, while Australia's 'new' policy on overseas students, coming out of the two reports, was announced in March 1985, this was not the end of the matter. The initial decision to retain the OSC, with an increase, maintained a level of status quo that reassured regional countries, such as Malaysia and Singapore. These nations continued to rely on the subsidy scheme, which in turn influenced the next major policy shift. After an election in 1987, Minister for Foreign Affairs Bill Hayden was offered the position of Governor-General. His replacement as foreign minister was Gareth Evans, who took control of the problems that the overseas student policy continued to create, both financially and politically. Thus, the scholarship program recommended by the Jackson Committee report was reshaped to become the Equity and Merit Scholarship Scheme, which is discussed in detail in the next chapter.

This chapter provides us with a new interpretation on what has, over intervening decades, been perceived as a turning point in Australian international education policy. The accepted 'understanding' that the Jackson Report is the point at which Australian international education turned from aid to trade is not nearly as simple as that. There was not a binary division, where Goldring recommended aid and Jackson recommended trade. There is no doubt that when reforms were made to the policies governing overseas students and international development scholarships, the Jackson Report provided more of the inspiration for the reforms than the Goldring Report did. The reality is, however, that the nature and pace of policy change was far more complex, influenced by more than simply a report issued by Sir Gordon Jackson. International economic pressure and domestic budget constraints, a neoliberal approach to policymaking coming from the UK, domestic higher education reforms and activist community organisations such as MELCOS were all involved in the reforms to overseas student policies over the late 1980s.

Major decisions were put off by the Hawke Government, following the lines of the Goldring Report, until the budget pressures could no longer be ignored. But by failing to fully adopt the recommendations of either of these reports, the Hawke Government continued a long tradition of iterative policymaking in the realm of international education and scholarships. Big reforms were rare to this point, and changes to policy were made 'around the edges' so as not to upset the status quo. The previous 'big reform' was the introduction of the subsidy scheme by a prime minister remembered for many of his reforms, Gough Whitlam. That scheme was allowed to continue, with small changes, for 16 years because it proved so popular with regional partners and domestic supporters. Changing the policy drastically after the release of Goldring and Jackson would have created problems domestically and internationally, and the Hawke Government chose to put off those problems. In the realm of scholarships, the Development Training Scheme also continued, along with small changes, over the decade of the 1980s, not dramatically or substantially changed by either Jackson or Goldring. While the turning-point narrative is appealing, in practice the iterative nature of policy change was continued through this period.

And while both Jackson and Goldring called for a more concerted focus on the Pacific, reflecting what they saw as Australia's obligations to the region, the Pacific remained a secondary policy focus. This failure to shift development and aid focus to the Pacific did not represent a complete lack of focus in the Pacific, which was far more likely to be viewed through a security lens during the 1980s as nuclear testing and other security concerns, such as coups in Fiji, came to the fore. These issues were all present as the Hawke Government implemented a significantly different scholarship late in the decade, discussed in the next chapter.

This text is taken from *Mandates and Missteps: Australian Government Scholarships to the Pacific – 1948 to 2018*, by Anna Kent, published 2024 by ANU Press, The Australian National University, Canberra, Australia.

doi.org/10.22459/MM.2024.07