

THINK.  
DO  
CHANGE.

# NATIONAL PERFORMANCE ASSESSMENTS IN HIGHER EDUCATION

Martin Hanlon  
Director Planning and Quality Unit, UTS  
Chair, Australian Network of University Planners

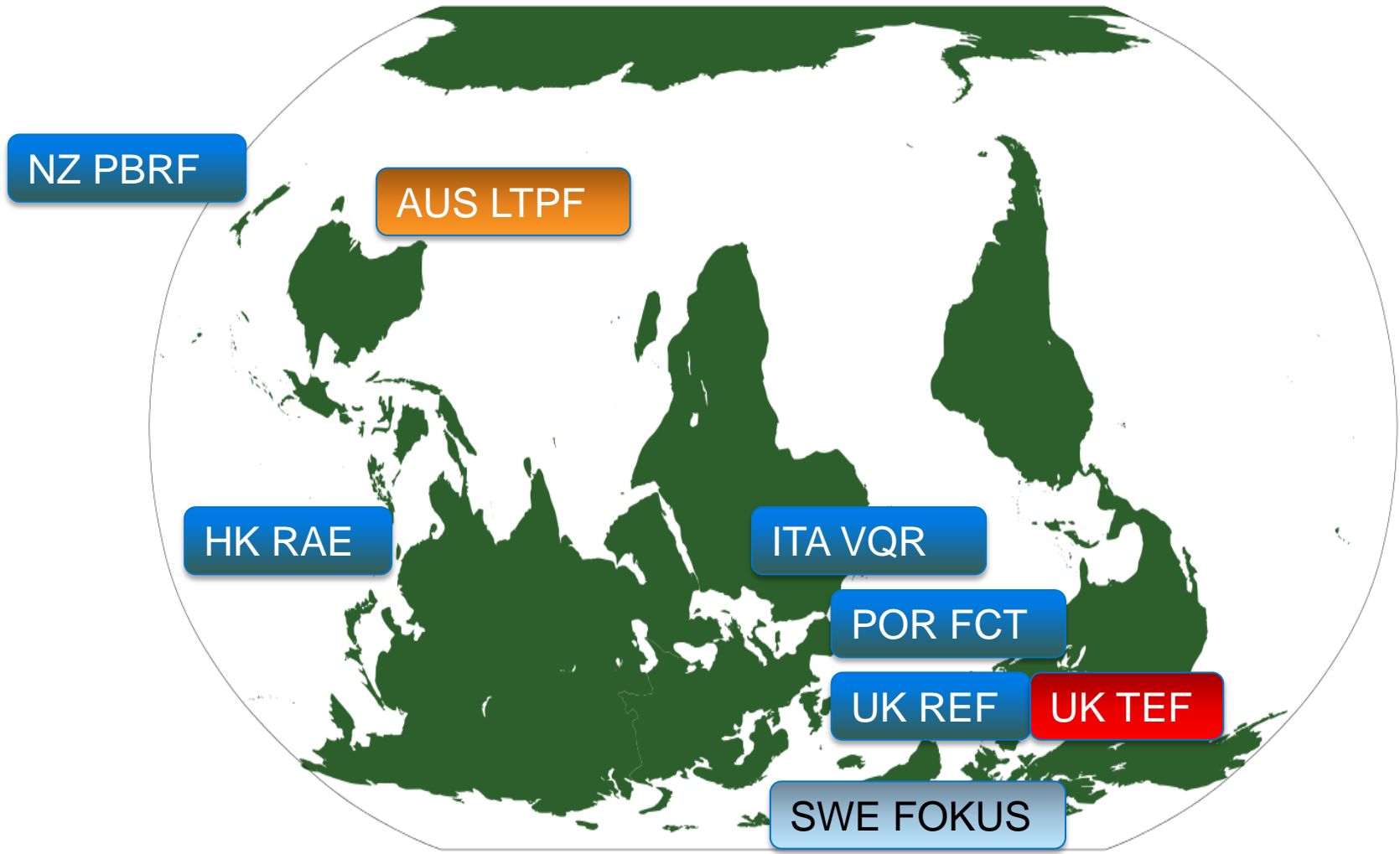
# GLOBAL CONTEXT

- National performance assessment schemes are becoming more widespread
- More prevalent for research than for teaching and learning
- Institutional research questions:
  - > What are the policy objectives of these schemes?
  - > Are these objectives being met?
  - > What behaviour do these schemes drive?
  - > Are funding incentives essential to driving outcomes?
  - > Why are the schemes not holistic in terms of university missions?

# OVERVIEW

- International examples of national performance assessment schemes
- Current schemes in Australia (QILT and ERA)
- Collaborative institutional research opportunities
- Observations and conclusions

# SOME CURRENT AND FORMER SCHEMES



# UK CONTEXT



Universities and colleges 160

Non-self accrediting colleges  
and institutions 700

<http://www.educationuk.org/global/articles/higher-education-universities-colleges/>

UTS:

# UK TEACHING EXCELLENCE FRAMEWORK

## **Purpose of the TEF**

The Government has introduced the TEF as a way of:

- a. Better informing students' choices about what and where to study
- b. Raising esteem for teaching
- c. Recognising and rewarding excellent teaching
- d. Better meeting the needs of employers, business, industry and the professions

## **TEF and Quality**

The TEF will build on a “baseline quality threshold”, providing an additional judgement on performance above the baseline, in the area of teaching and learning quality

Teaching excellence is defined broadly to include teaching quality, the learning environment, and student outcomes and learning gain.

<http://www.hefce.ac.uk/pubs/year/2016/201632/>

## 24. Figure 2: The assessment framework – conceptual model

<b>Aspect of quality</b> <i>Areas of teaching and learning quality</i>	<b>Teaching Quality</b>	<b>Learning Environment</b>	<b>Student Outcomes and Learning Gain</b>
<b>Criteria</b> <i>Statements that identify what assessors will be looking for</i>	Teaching Quality criteria	Learning Environment criteria	Student Outcomes and Learning Gain criteria
<b>Evidence</b> <i>The evidence base that will be used to form a judgement against the criteria, made up of core metrics and additional evidence</i>	<b>Core metrics</b>		
	National Student Survey (Q 1-4 – teaching on course; Q 5-9 – assessment and feedback)	National Student Survey (Q 10-12 – academic support) Non-continuation (HESA)	Employment/destination (DLHE) Potential highly-skilled jobs metric
	<b>Additional evidence (provider submission)</b>		
<b>Statement of findings</b> <i>Description of performance in each aspect</i>	<b>Teaching Quality statement of findings</b>	<b>Learning Environment statement of findings</b>	<b>Student Outcomes and Learning Gain statement of findings</b>
	<b>Possible Commendations</b>		
<b>Overall outcome</b> <i>TEF rating</i>	<b>TEF Rating</b>		

# UK RESEARCH EXCELLENCE FRAMEWORK

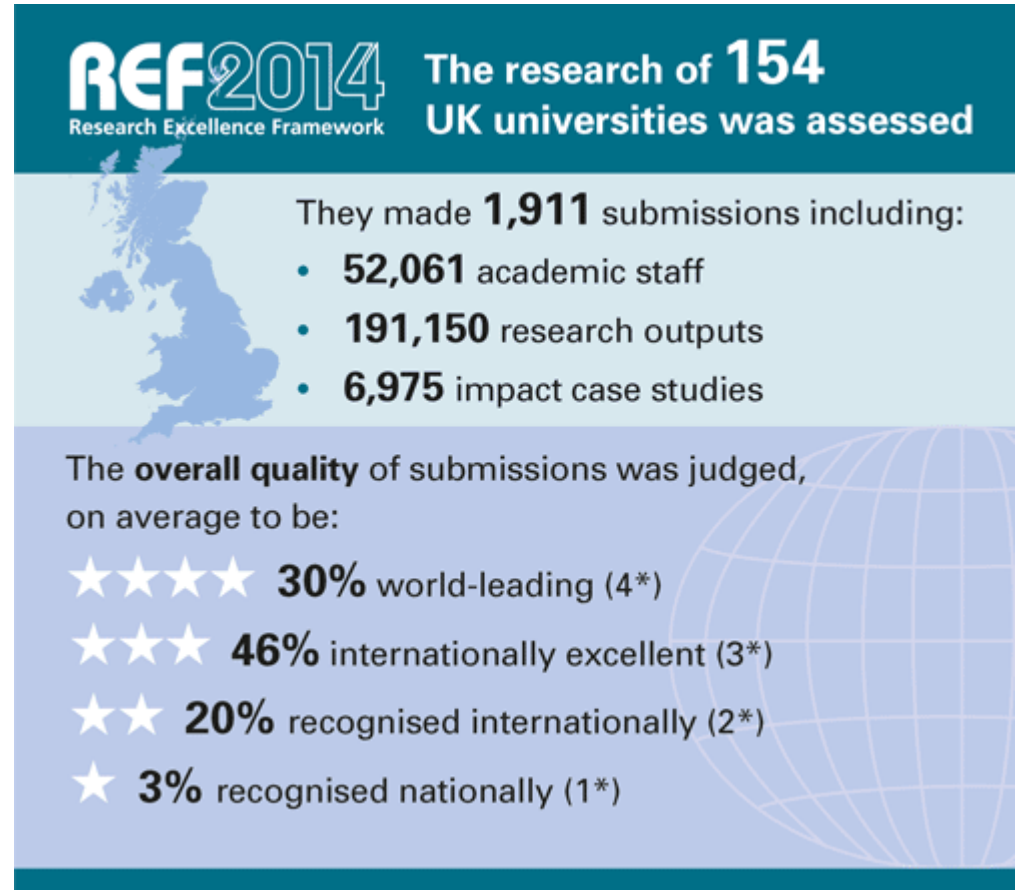
## Primary Purpose:

To assess quality of research and produce outcomes for each submission made by institutions

- Four HE funding bodies used assessment outcomes to inform allocation of research grants from 2015-16

- Assessment provides accountability for public investment in research and produces evidence of benefits of this investment

- Next REF scheduled for 2021





# STERN REVIEW OF REF JULY 2016

REF is run every 5 to 6 years - requires UK research universities to submit their top research papers, demonstrating the impact of their work. Results are used to inform allocation of government funding.

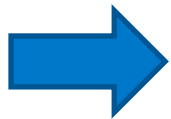
Stern's review of the Research Excellence Framework – “Building on Success and Learning from Experience” proposed:

- to count all research active staff in the REF but varying the number of pieces they might submit - currently HE institutions select staff that will be included - this innovation will ease pressure and encourage academics to research new areas or on a longer time-scale
- widening and deepening the notion of research “impact” to include influence on public engagement, culture and on teaching, avoiding distortions of research choices and careers
- introducing a new institutional level assessment to foster greater cohesiveness between academics and reward collaboration on interdisciplinary activities

Also highlights that REF should support excellence wherever it is found.

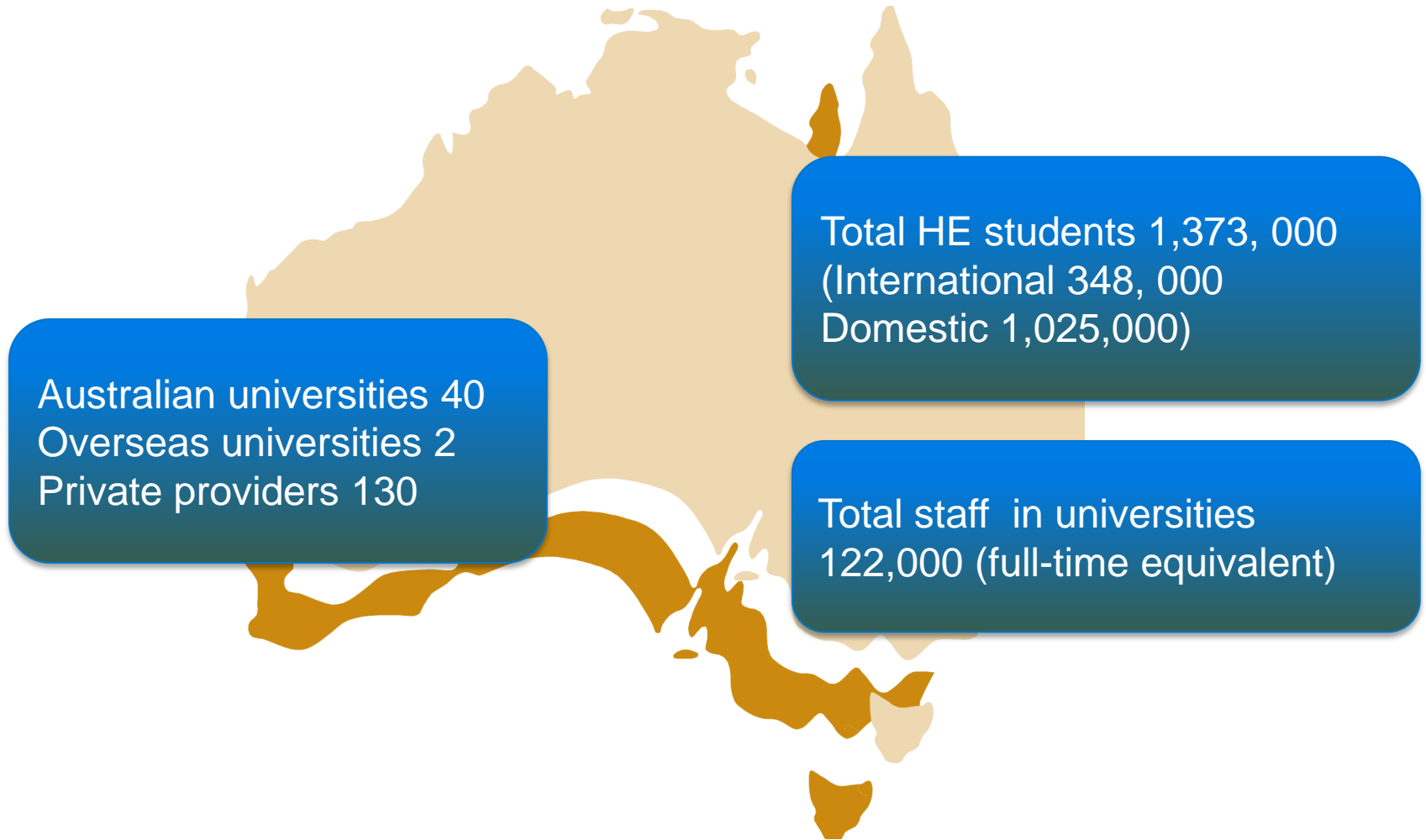
# CONTEXT FOR THESE SCHEMES

- Increasingly pervasive audit culture
- Proliferation of university rankings and ratings
- Extensive use of bibliometrics
- Increasing sophistication of performance measures

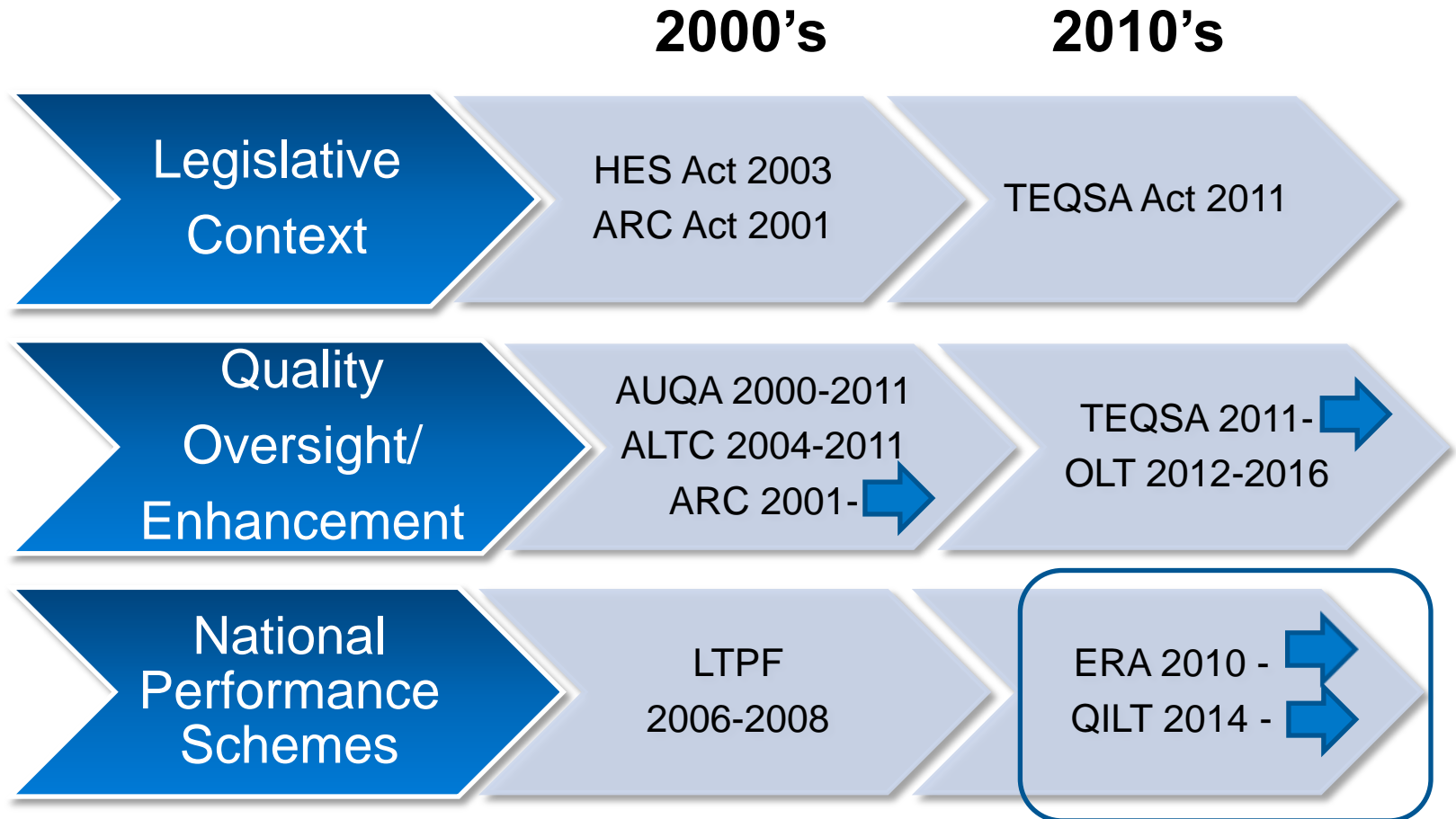


Increased public quantification of institutional performance

# AUSTRALIAN CONTEXT



# AUSTRALIA'S JOURNEY



# T&L ASSESSMENT: QILT

The screenshot displays the QILT website interface. At the top left is the QILT logo, which consists of a colorful geometric shape made of overlapping triangles in shades of teal, green, yellow, and orange, followed by the text "QILT" in a large, bold, sans-serif font, and "quality indicators for learning and teaching" in a smaller font below it.

To the right of the logo, there are two paragraphs of text: "Choose a university or higher education institution that is best for you." and "Compare undergraduate student experience and graduate employment."

On the top right, there is a section titled "Help me get started" which contains a video player with a play button icon and a bar chart with five bars of different colors (red, teal, orange, green, purple). Below the video player is a link that says "View transcript".

Below the main content area is a navigation bar with several items: a home icon and the text "Home", the text "Study Areas", the text "Institutions", a star icon and the text "My Shortlist", a green badge with the number "0", and a downward arrow icon.

The main content area below the navigation bar features a large background image of a group of five young people walking through a wooded area. Overlaid on this image are two search prompts: "Find a study area" and "Find an institution". Each prompt is followed by a dark input field and a pink "GO" button. A small green circle with the text "OR" is positioned between the two search prompts.

# QILT COMPONENTS

- Based on recommendations of Advancing Quality for Higher Education Reference Group
- QILT = three survey instruments progressively replacing previous surveys:
  1. **Student Experience Survey (SES)** - measures first-year and later-year onshore undergraduate students' course experiences in five areas: student support, learning resources, learner engagement, teaching quality and skills development.
  2. **Graduate Outcomes Survey (GOS) and GOS-L (Longitudinal)** - focuses on graduate outcomes (e.g. further study, employment). Longitudinal component of survey (GOS-L) targets graduates every year for three years after graduation.
  3. **Employer Satisfaction Survey (ESS)** - assesses how satisfied employers are with skills and training of graduates.



# RESEARCH ASSESSMENT: ERA



Australian Government  
Australian Research Council

## ERA 2015

### Excellence in Research for Australia



# ERA INDICATORS

- A comprehensive quality evaluation of all research produced in Australian universities against national and international benchmarks.
- In 2015, indicators in four broad areas were used:
  1. **Research quality** – considered publishing behaviour, citation analysis or ERA peer review, and peer reviewed Australian and international research income.
  2. **Research activity** – considered research outputs, research income and other research items from eligible researchers.
  3. **Research application** – considered research commercialisation income, patents, Plant Breeder's Rights, registered designs, and National Health and Medical Research Council (NHMRC) endorsed guidelines.
  4. **Recognition** – considered a limited range of esteem measures.



# CRITIQUE OF AUSTRALIA'S SCHEMES

- QILT: founded on student lifecycle and transparent, but dependent on self-reporting of students and graduates
- ERA: comprehensive and sound peer review process, but infrequent and driving questionable behaviour
- Overall:
  - No coherent overarching policy framework (unlike UK's TEF and REF?)
  - ERA driving institutional behaviour, QILT not as yet
  - ERA actively leveraged by Government, QILT not as yet

# COLLABORATIVE IR OPPORTUNITIES

- “Success” depends on shared commitment by government and institutions to quality and quality improvement
- Ideally each scheme would trigger cross-institution collaborations for benchmarking, sharing of good practice and peer review
- But is this occurring?
- And who should collaborate – institutions under same scheme (i.e. local), or like institutions internationally?
- Does resourcing of schemes extend beyond participation to enabling improvement and collaborative institutional research?

# CONCLUSIONS

1. Higher education policy would benefit from clearly articulated whole-of-government positions on what the intended outcomes are for each national performance assessment scheme.
2. Adequate resources should be assigned at national and institutional levels to deliver on these outcomes.
3. Governments should consider developing more holistic national assessment frameworks, ideally integrating the full spectrum of university missions: teaching and learning, research and external engagement.
4. Institutional researchers should undertake more in depth meta-analyses of national assessment schemes across the world to compare and contrast the relative impact of various approaches.

**DR MARIAN MAHAT**  
**THE UNIVERSITY OF MELBOURNE**  
**[MARIAN.MAHAT@UNIMELB.EDU.AU](mailto:MARIAN.MAHAT@UNIMELB.EDU.AU)**

**MARTIN HANLON**  
**UNIVERSITY OF TECHNOLOGY SYDNEY**  
**[MARTIN.HANLON@UTS.EDU.AU](mailto:MARTIN.HANLON@UTS.EDU.AU)**

This presentation is adapted from a submission version of a chapter to appear for publication by Edward Elgar Publishing Ltd in the forthcoming book *Research Handbook on Quality, Performance and Accountability in Higher Education* edited by in E. Hazelkorn, H. Coates & A. McCormick and is due to be published in 2017.