INTRODUCTION

• 2008 Australian Government Review of Higher Education

• Major reform agenda with the aim to transform the scale, potential and quality of the nation’s universities

• Two attainment targets:
  
  – by 2020 20% of higher education enrolments at the undergraduate level be of people from a low SES background

  – by 2025 40% of all 25 to 34 year olds will hold a qualification at bachelor level or above
REFORMS

• Move to a more competitive market based system in 2012 – universities can enrol as many students as they wish and government funding will follow

• This will enable the sector to grow in response to demand from students and the needs of the community for more graduates

• It is anticipated that this will lead to:
  – an additional 50,000 students to commence university by 2013
  – produce an estimated 217,000 additional graduates by 2025
QUALITY ASSURANCE IN AN EXPANDING HIGHER EDUCATION SYSTEM

- Risks to quality in a growing higher education system:
  - new providers
  - competition by providers for students
  - need for increased consumer protection
  - teaching and learning demands of a larger and more diverse body of students

- New quality and regulatory arrangements are being introduced to ensure student protection and to ensure Australia’s reputation as a quality provider of tertiary education
A NEW APPROACH TO REGULATION AND QUALITY ASSURANCE

- It is in this context that the Australian Government is establishing the Tertiary Education Quality and Standards Agency (TEQSA)

- TEQSA will be an independent body with powers to:
  - register providers
  - accredit courses of study
  - carry out evaluations of standards and performance
  - protect and assure the quality of international education

- Decision-making within the agency will be the responsibility of a five member Commission, including a Chief Commissioner who will also act as CEO of the agency
NATIONAL CONSISTENCY

- TEQSA will build on the strong foundations of AUQA and State and Territory GAAs to bring together regulation and quality assurance in one agency.

- It will reduce the number of regulatory bodies from nine to one.

- Providers who had to deal with many regulatory agencies across jurisdictions will only have to deal with a single regulator.

- As a national regulator, TEQSA will have the ability to ensure consistency across all states and territories in Australia.
MOVING TOWARDS AN INTEGRATED REGULATORY FRAMEWORK

**CURRENT**
- 9 Agencies and jurisdictions
- Mutual Recognition
- 5 year cycle
- Process can take up to 12 months
- Panel based review
- ESOS, GAA and AUQA process separate

**NEW**
- 1 national regulatory agency
- Up to 7 year risk based cycle
- Average 4-6 month assessment
- Professional and peer review
- Process integrated regulatory process
- Whole-of-provider focus
A RISK BASED AND PROPORTIONATE APPROACH

• TEQSA will adopt a risk-based and proportionate approach to regulation

  Risk based
  – Institutions will be assessed against a risk framework
  – Instead of a time-based auditing cycle, the timetable for re-registration or quality evaluation will be based on a risk assessment of the institution

  Proportionate
  – ‘Proportionate’ regulation means that institutions can expect that any action that will be taken in relation to a provider, or accreditation of a course of study, will be related to the level of risk that the matter poses

• This approach will allow TEQSA to focus its activities on new entrants to the system and higher risk providers, while ensuring that high quality providers will not be unnecessarily burdened
THREE PRINCIPLES FOR REGULATION

• **Principle of regulatory necessity**
  – TEQSA must not burden the higher education provider any more than is reasonably necessary

• **Principle of reflecting risk**
  – In exercising its powers, TEQSA must have regard to a range of factors, including the provider’s history of scholarship, teaching and research, its students’ experiences, its financial status and capacity, and its history of compliance

• **Principle of proportionate regulation**
  – TEQSA must exercise its powers in proportion to any non-compliance, or the risk of future non-compliance, by the provider
THEMATIC REVIEWS

- TEQSA will be able to focus on a specific area of risk within:
  - the sector
  - an institution
  - across a cohort of providers or courses
  - explore areas of concern

- The reviews will identify best practice and diagnose weaknesses

- They will be customised depending on the area of review

- The focus of the reviews will be on prevention and will provide guidance to TEQSA’s regulatory work
The need for clear, strong standards was raised in the Bradley Review and consultations with the sector.

Focus on outcomes and standards to ensure that students and the community can be confident about the quality of Australian qualifications.

Oversight of the Framework will be the responsibility of a Higher Education Standards Panel.
TEQSA will register and evaluate the performance of higher education providers against a new **Higher Education Standards Framework** comprising:

- Provider Standards
- Qualifications Standards
- Information Standards
- Teaching and Learning Standards
- Research Standards

**Threshold Standards**
COMPLIANCE WITH THE HIGHER EDUCATION STANDARDS FRAMEWORK

- TEQSA’s approach will recognise and encourage the diversity of providers’ missions, curriculum and approach to delivery

- Compliance with the standards will not compromise academic freedom nor reduce diversity in the delivery of higher education

- The standards will set out the expectations that the public, including students, government and academics, have of higher education providers and courses
POWERS TO ACT

• TEQSA signals a shift from a quality assurance body that has ‘powers of persuasion’ to one that has ‘powers to take action’

• TEQSA will have legislated powers to intervene with an escalating set of actions where a lapse in quality is identified

• TEQSA will have the power to:
  – impose conditions on a provider’s registration
  – impose sanctions
  – de-register a higher education provider
TRANSPARENCY

• TEQSA’s audit reports and the Register of Higher Education Providers will be publicly available on TEQSA's website.

• Register will be a database that contains information on providers such as their:
  – provider category
  – due date for a re-registration including any conditions
  – courses on offer
  – whether a provider has self-accrediting status

• MyUniversity website, targeted at current and potential students, will provide information on courses, campuses, facilities, support services, and the quality of teaching and learning outcomes.
AN INTEGRATED TERTIARY EDUCATION SECTOR
AND A GLOBALLY CONNECTED AGENCY

• The establishment of TEQSA coincides with the creation of the National VET Regulator

• The agencies are being established in parallel to work towards an integrated tertiary education system and with a view to a potential merger from 2013

• TEQSA will engage and share best practice with its international counterparts and establish links with international quality and accreditation agencies
PRESENT AND FUTURE CHALLENGES

- Ensuring enough flexibility in the regulatory approach, risk assessment model, and application of the standards-based framework so that innovation is not stifled
- TEQSA’s powers to intervene
- Development of quality standards in teaching and learning, research and information
- How the standards will be applied
- Development of guides to TEQSA’s regulatory approaches
- Transition from AUQA and State and Territory GAAs
- Adequate data collection