

## From Public to Private – The Shifting Sands of Higher Education

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Higher Education in Australia has largely been a public affair for most of its life, unlike the United States where many of the truly great institutions are private universities. The scene began to change in Australia when Bond University opened and ACU gained university status, and it has been a case of slow growth since then. In the last ten years that growth has increased on the back of increasing international student numbers, and we are now in the situation where private higher education institutions outnumber public ones by some considerable amount. Why has this been so different to the VET sector or the school sector where private institutions have always been a large piece of the landscape? What do private institutions offer that public ones can't? It is likely that growth will only be in the private sector – it is highly unlikely that any government will open a new publicly funded higher education institution, so we should be vitally interested in the state of the private sector in higher education. This paper examines the history - including comparisons with other parts of the education sector, the current state of affairs – including the products and services that private institutions compete with, and the likely futures of private higher education institutions.