

## EDUCATION REVIEW

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## Dividing line

The "confliction line" drawn up in 2004 for certification of Waikato land is portrayed by Waikato Institute of Technology Centre for Creative Industries head CK Reynolds in a new installation in Hamilton.

Reynolds photographed the 43m straight line from the air and digitally stitched the photographs together into a 2D wire installation, now on show at the Hamilton Waikatoan Artforum and Sculpture Park.

The confliction line was created after the Waikato Land Wars, and was later used to determine the border between the Waikato and Matamata-Piako districts.

Reynolds' work is part of an exhibition entitled ESCAPE Sculpture in the Landscape, running until May 25.

## Universities oppose new university category

TERTIARY/SHANE HARRIS

**UNIVERSITIES' ARGUMENTS AGAINST** the controversial universities of technology bill found a receptive audience among members of the Education and Science Select Committee this week - an ominous sign for the bill's chief supporter, Unitec.

The bill proposes creation of a new category of tertiary institution - the university of technology - which would occupy a space somewhere between universities and polytechnics in terms of research and the qualifications offered.

The Education and Science Select Committee began hearing oral submissions on the bill this week.

Victoria University vice-chancellor Pat Walsh, for the Vice-Chancellors' Committee (NZVCC), Auckland University chancellor Hugh Fletcher and vice-chancellor Stuart McCutcheon, and Auckland University of Technology (AUT) vice-chancellor Derek McCormack, fielded questions from the Education and Science Select Committee in a group.

The quartet was predominantly concerned with fighting for the term "university" and its legal significance. They claimed a new category of "universities of technology" would damage the worldwide reputation of New Zealand's existing eight universities and the ability of their graduates to find jobs overseas.

McCutcheon told the committee: "It's not about the suffix, it's about the prefix. It's not the 'of technology' bit that's the problem."

Opening submissions, Walsh said the bill was "uninspired, misleading and unnecessary".

Submissions from Auckland and AUT followed similar lines. Fletcher warned the creation of universities of technology would lead to "more duplication of low quality degrees" and "would only encourage [polytechnics] to shift their

focus to an already overcrowded university sector".

The NZVCC submission pointed out that universities known as "universities of technology" overseas, particularly in Australia, were generally not dual-sector institutions as proposed by the bill and met the requirements of being a university.

McCormack said AUT had had to exhibit the characteristics of a university since achieving that status, and considered itself similar to overseas universities of technology - but not the new type of institution proposed by the bill.

He added that AUT had "invested heavily and successfully" in building its brand and this would be damaged if the bill was to succeed. McCormack said AUT would have to rebrand and this would be "grossly unfair".

The three universities maintained the aim of raising workplace skills and knowledge outlined in the bill was already being well met by the polytechnic sector.

New Zealand First's Dail Jones, supporting the bill introduced by his predecessor as education spokesperson, Brian Donnelly, suggested that the title "university of technology" was a more "intellectually honest" way of describing institutions offering degree-level courses but having little research capability.

Jones used the "post-1992" universities in the UK as an example. He said the conversion of former polytechnics to university status had not damaged the reputation of older British universities.

But McCormack and McCutcheon both disagreed. McCormack said the new British universities did not offer courses at pre-degree level - these being supplied by colleges of further and higher education - but New Zealand's polytechnics provided both pre-degree and degree-level courses.

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## Unit-standard based degree turned down - for now

**A CONTROVERSIAL APPLICATION** to register a degree consisting of unit standards has been knocked back, with the Qualifications Authority insisting on a course approval process different from that required for other programmes registered on the National Qualifications Framework.

The Extractives Industry Training Organisation (Eito) made the landmark

application last year. It proposed a degree consisting of existing unit standards at levels 4-6 of the framework (NQF) and new level seven standards based on courses offered by the University of Queensland.

After consultation last year, the Qualifications Authority agreed that degrees could be registered on the Qualifications Framework, but would require an application for course approval,

an application for accreditation to offer the degree, and an application for NZQA consent to grant the degree.

NZQA deputy chief executive, quality assurance, Mike Welling said the degree provider would have to satisfy the requirements for degrees set out in the Education Act.

"An NQF degree would have to meet the same quality standards that apply to all degree applications irrespective of whether

the application is a national degree or not," he said.

"The statutory requirements mean such applications need to demonstrate that the degree constitutes a course of advanced learning, that degree teaching is underpinned by research capability and the degree course emphasises the general principles and basic knowledge for self-directed learning and work."

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