

# Challenge, Change and Transition — Keynote Address

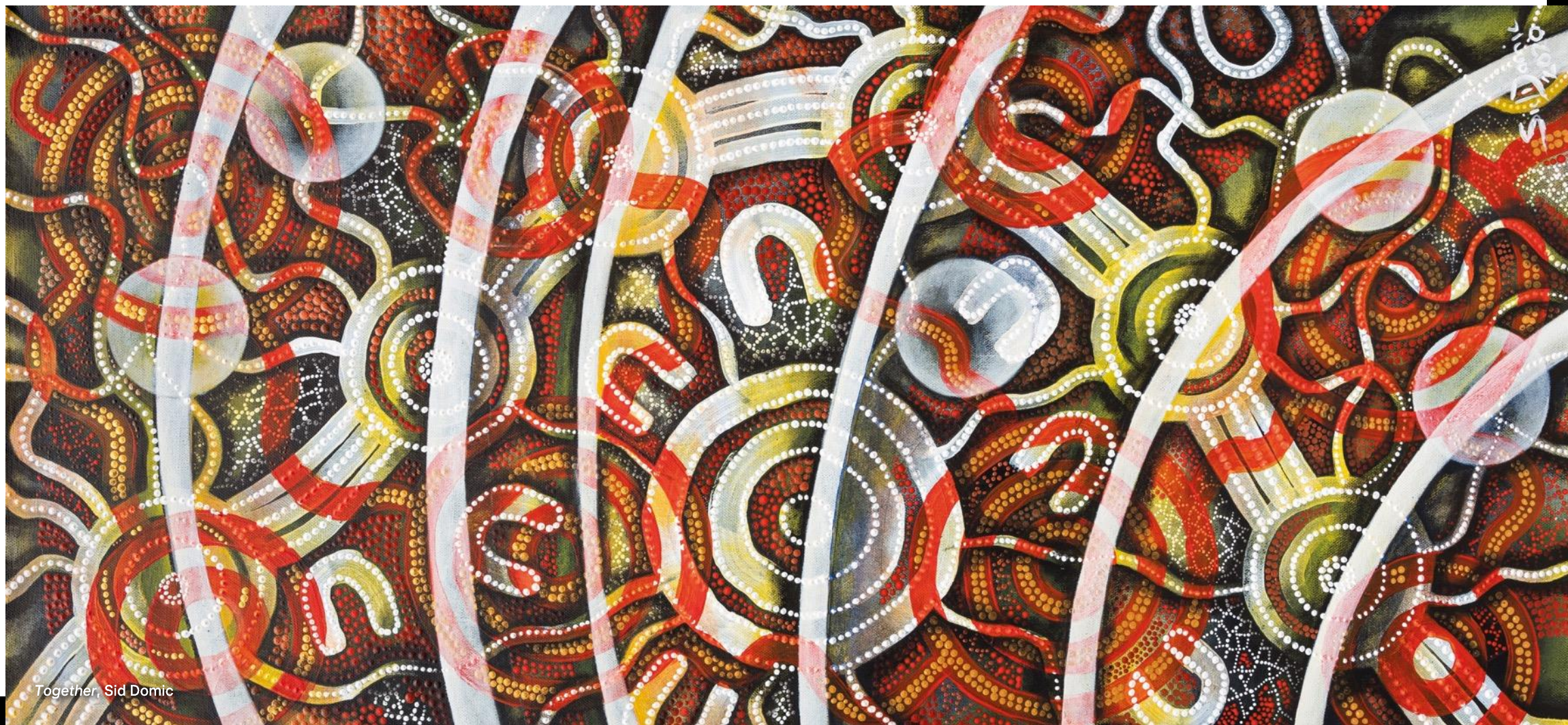
Professor Carolyn Evans, AHEIA President



Queensland Australia

# ACKNOWLEDGEMENT OF COUNTRY

AHEIA acknowledges the traditional custodians of the land on which we meet today – the Muwinina people of the Nipaluna/Hobart region, and extends that respect to all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.



Together, Sid Domic

# Acting Now to Create the Future Workforce

- Need to shift beyond reactivity to circumstances and focus on the future
- Recognise what we are doing well now and be realistic about where change is needed
- Focus on the key external impediments to creating a university workforce that will meet the needs of our communities (not just ourselves)
- Use the Accord as an opportunity to try to reset relationships



# The Future of Work: The Future of Higher Education

# Challenge, Change and Transition Over the Next Decade: Workforce

- Competition for talent will continue to be intense, exacerbated by a hollowed out middle in the sector as baby boomers exit the workforce.
- Employees will expect more flexibility and a willingness of employers to recognise life outside work.
- According to the demographer Bernard Salt, 22 per cent of our population will be over 65 by 2040, demanding increased productivity per worker and presenting one of the biggest healthcare challenges in the nation's history.
- Some industries will disappear altogether, others will be significantly changed. Digital change will disrupt white collar as well as blue collar roles.
- People will likely shift jobs and sectors more often rather than just being promoted through the same employer.



# Challenge, Change and Transition Over the Next Decade: Education

- Demand for university level qualifications will increase to meet future skill demands
- Universities need to meet the demands of the next industrial revolution in renewable energy and innovation
- The Productivity Commission has predicted that more than half of the one million jobs created over the next five years will require a university degree and almost all jobs will require post-school training.
- Professionals will need to spend more time upskilling and reskilling – with the average Australian spending three hours per week in education and training by 2040, representing a 33% increase across their lifetime (AlphaBeta, 2018 Future Skills Report)
- Globally, some key private players will emerge in providing relatively high-quality, relatively low-cost education and training – particularly in areas where skills matter more than qualifications. Universities could be left carrying the expensive and complex degrees in areas like health and engineering that require accreditation.



# Implication for University Workforces

- We will need to
  - ensure that we are places that can attract and retain talented and qualified people in a time of fierce competition for talent
  - be agile to respond to the rapidly changing society of which we are part
  - be flexible, including about staffing arrangements
  - be less siloed and less divided between academic and professional staff
  - be connected with other sectors (private and public) including through the movement of people in and out of our sector

# The Present: Good, Bad and Complex

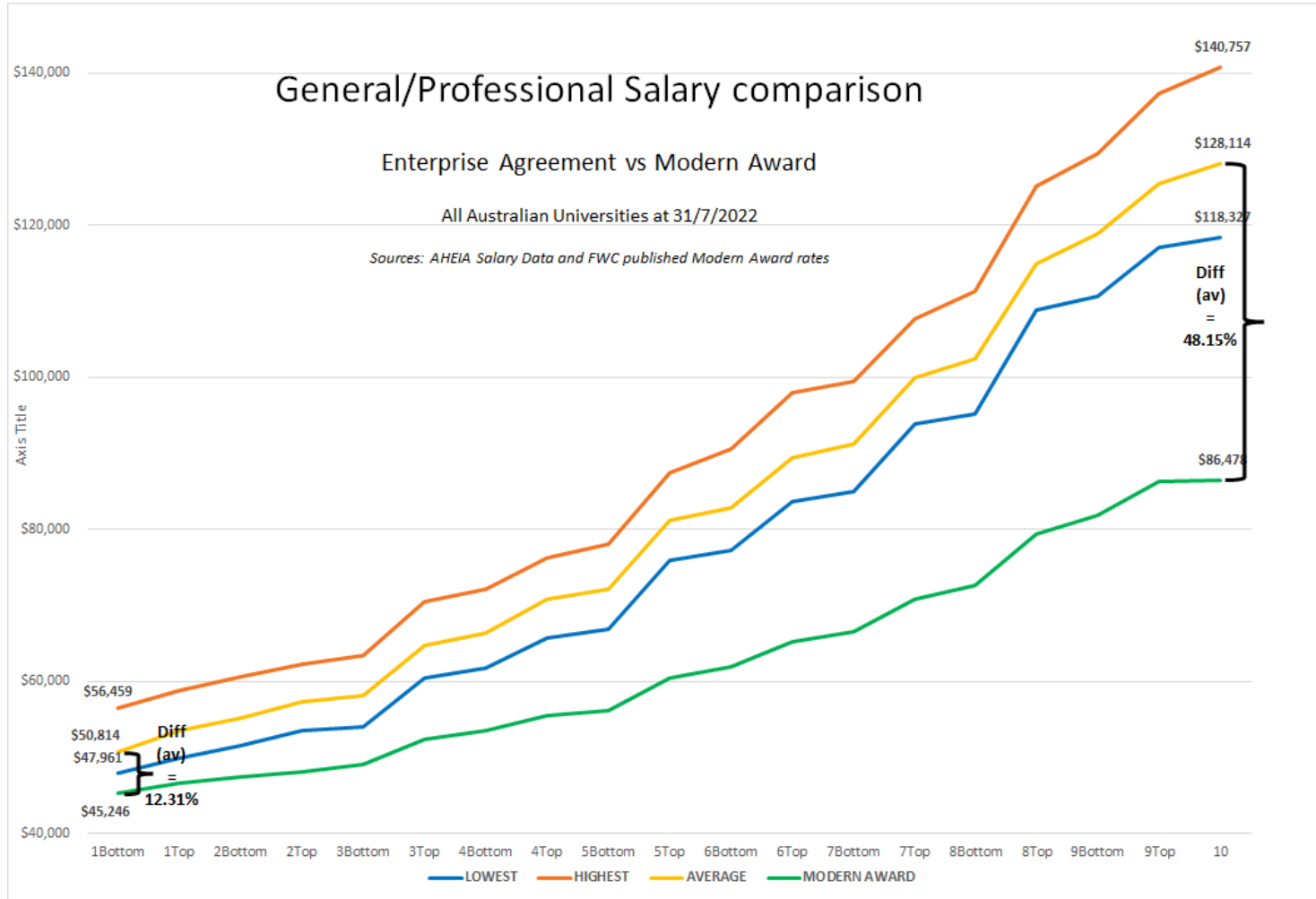


# Universities Are Good Employers

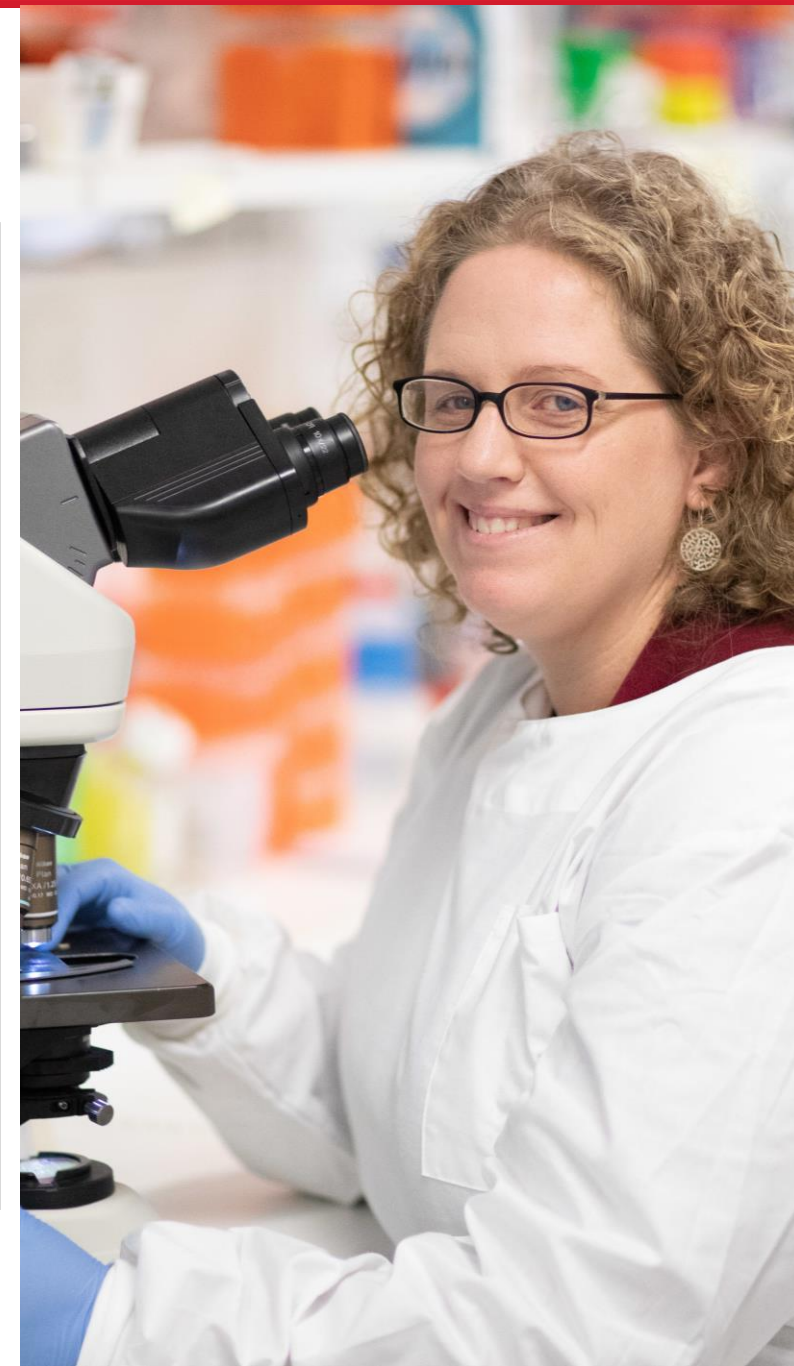
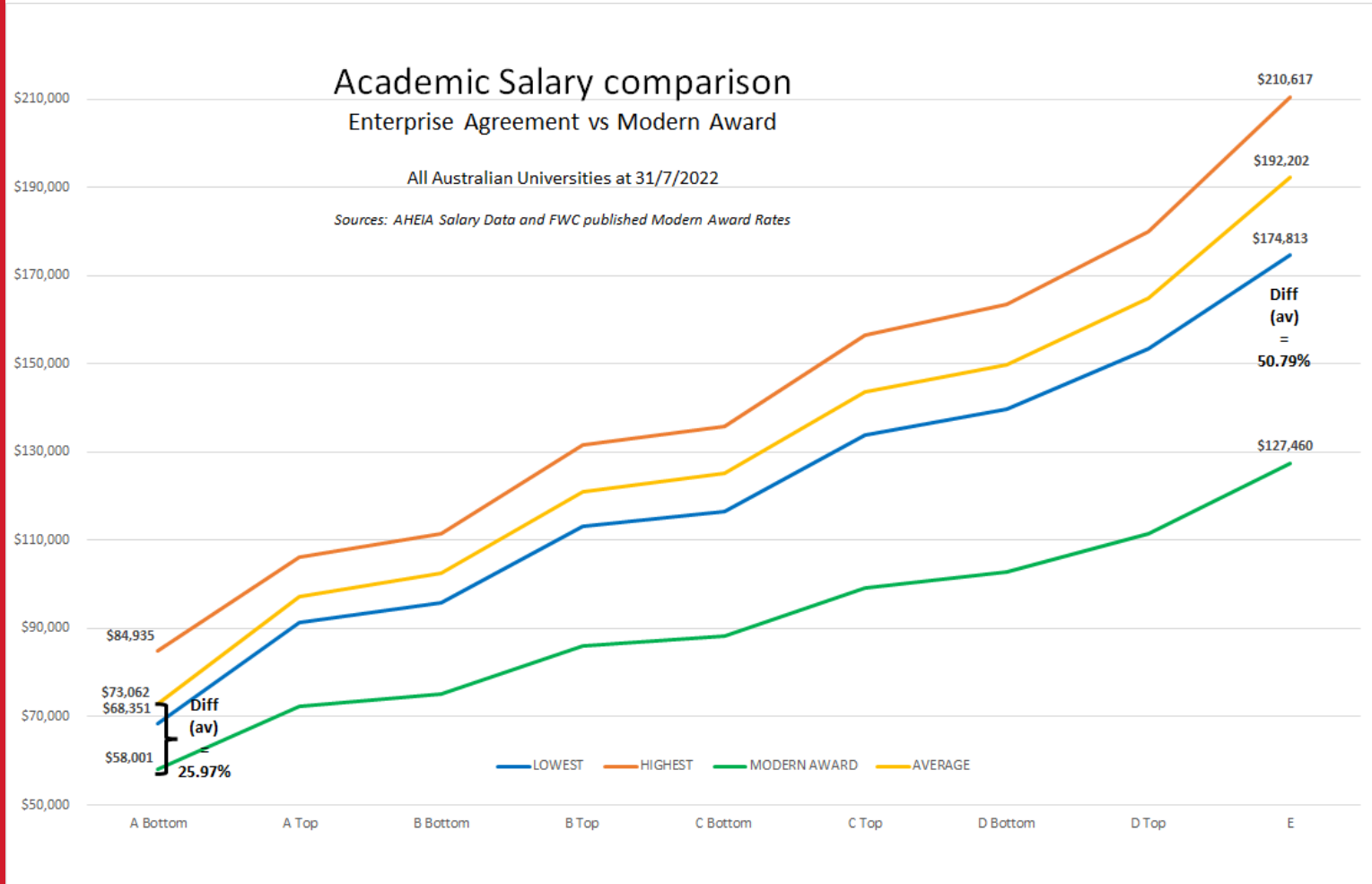
- The sector has some of the most generous industrial conditions in Australia.
  - Higher than average pay compared to other awards
  - 17% superannuation for most employees
  - Above legal minimum forms of leave (cultural leave, generous paid parental leave, gender transition)
  - Flexible work arrangements for many employees
  - Professional development/scholarships/educational discounts
- Many people have high degrees of autonomy and capacity to work in their areas of interest and a commitment to the value of their work



# Pay for Professional Staff



# Pay for Academic Staff



# Redundancy Pay and Entitlements Across the Sector

Cross section of redundancy entitlements for academic staff

University/ National Employment Standards	Notice period (maximum weeks)	Minimum payment (weeks' salary)	Maximum payment (weeks' salary)
NES	4	4	16
Curtin	12	13	82
Monash	26	29	78
Melbourne	8	23	74
ANU	6	5	68
Griffith	12	13	64
Charles Sturt	16	3	60
ACU	26	4	52
CQU	22	4	52
La Trobe	22	3	52
Deakin	26	2	52

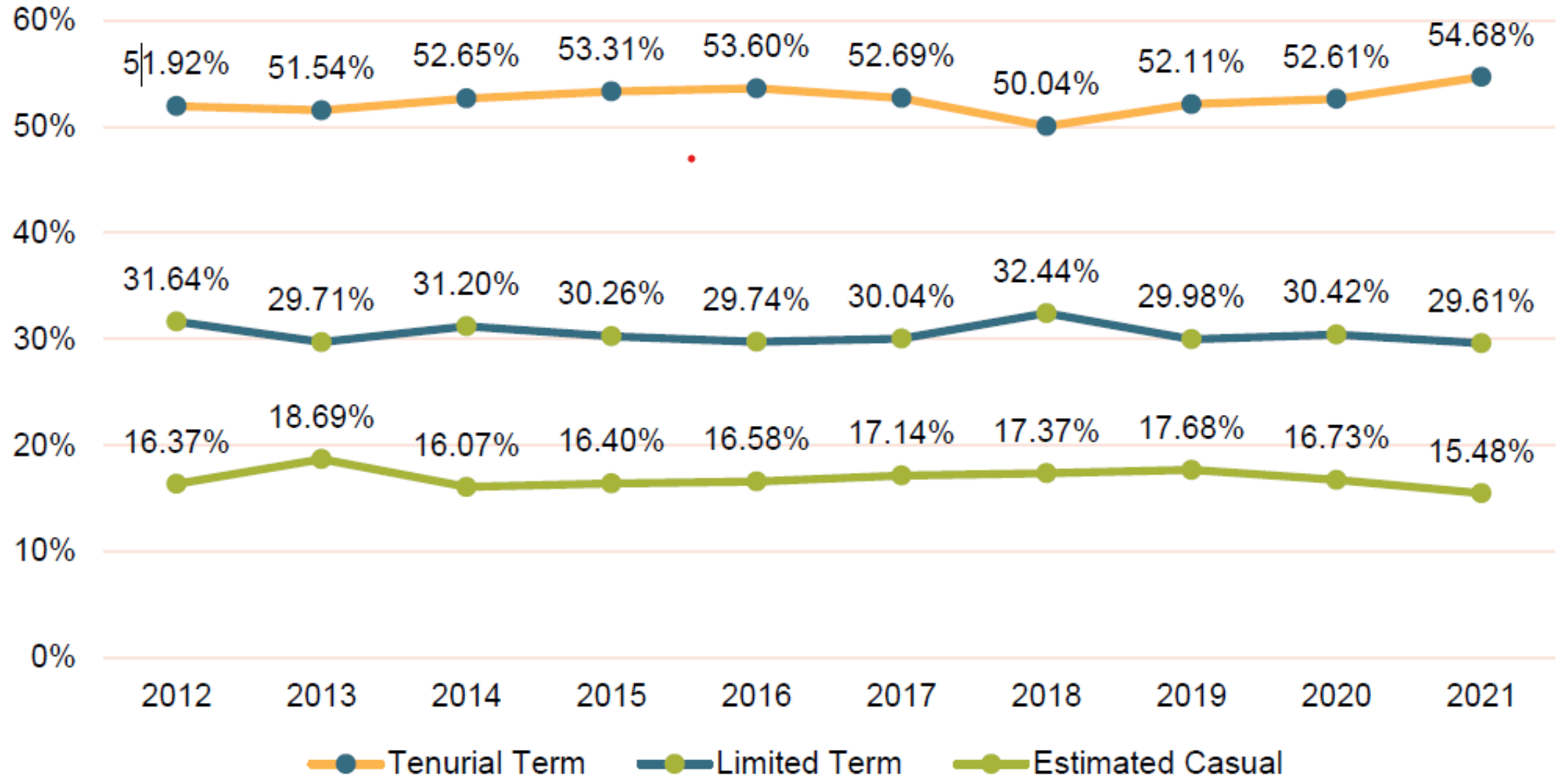
- All universities provide well above the maximum NES entitlements for maximum payments
- 75% of total EAs (recorded in AHEIA's EA clause database) have at least double the notice period within the NES, with some notice periods extending to 12 months for ongoing academic staff
- 79% of total EAs (recorded in AHEIA's EA clause database) allow for greater than 52 weeks salary in redundancy payments
- Most universities have additional benefits above and beyond the NES, including:
  - Extensive redeployment and salary maintenance entitlements
  - Academic employment transition payments (16 weeks for ANU academic staff)
  - Time off work without loss of pay for the purpose of seeking other employment
  - Paid or worked Entitlement Periods

# What's Not Working for Employees?

- Concern about levels of non-permanent employees
  - Rates of casualisation and contract employees in universities has been either steady or declining over the last decade but still close to half the workforce
  - Casual staff are a mix – a lot of students, professionals and people who want the flexibility of casual work
  - For some people, who are seeking permanent roles, extended periods of time in casual positions brings personal and professional challenges. What do we owe them?
  - Research focused staff can spend lengthy periods on soft money which creates uncertainty
  - Casual workers have been underpaid at many universities
- Concerns around academic workloads in a post-pandemic world and the reality of hybrid learning
- Sense of decreasing autonomy – combination of government regulation, greater central direction in large universities and with more stakeholder voices



# Changes in Workforce Composition Over Time



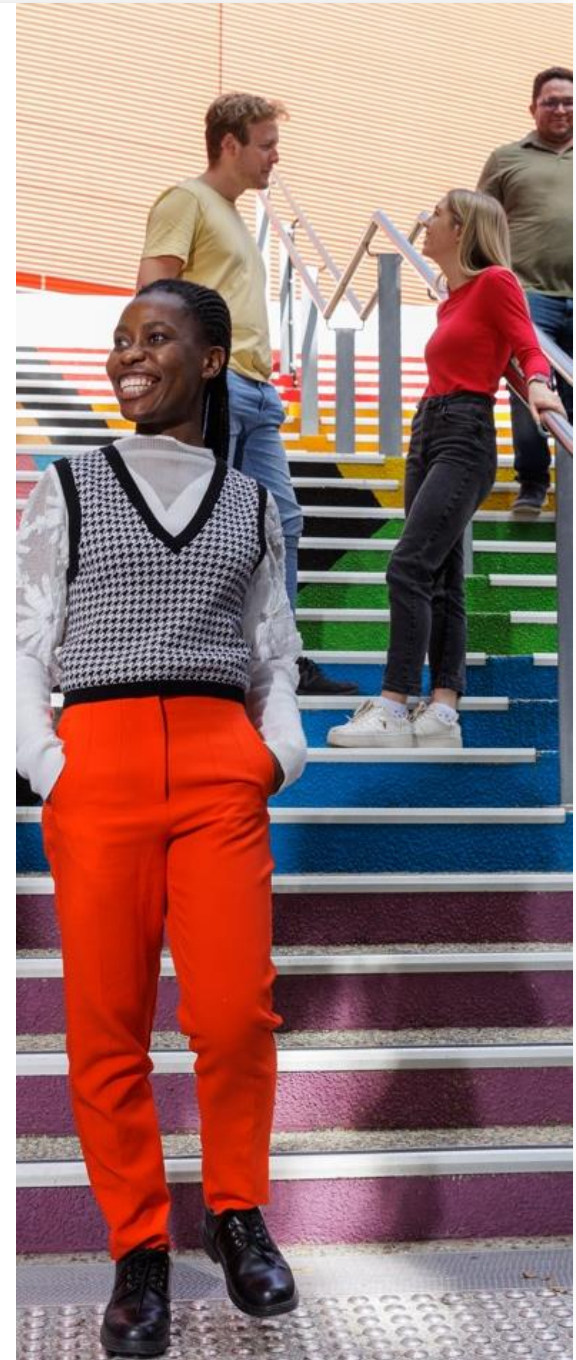
# Challenges From University Viewpoints

- Inflexibility of current arrangements – our agreements are long, complex, and make compliance (including with wages) very hard
- The 40-40-20 academic workload model (or even 70-30) and barriers in EAs to changing work types at odds with requirements to decasualise
- The high cost of redundancies make it harder to take risks which is at odds with the desire to create more ongoing roles for contract and casual staff
- Complex HEW level system for professional staff and rigid divisions between professional and academic staff
- Increased levels of government regulation and constraints on funding lead to decreased autonomy for staff and institutions and make it difficult to meet some of the demands of staff.
- Combination of financial and regulatory constraints limit capacity to remain responsive in a volatile and rapidly changing world.



# What Can Employers and Employees Agree on in the Sector?

- The importance of higher education to Australian society and the need proper funding for our universities
- Being able to decrease precarious employment (casualisation and contract-to-contact work)
- Desire to make universities a place that attracts and retains the best talent
- Fostering a diverse staff and student cohort





# Where to from here?

## Where Will We Need To Be in 10 Years Time?

- Positive working environments for staff
- We need to ensure that universities are trusted institutions in society, and the way employees speak of us is critical to that
- We will need to navigate expectations of privilege among staff (including senior leadership levels)
- Less professional/academic staff divide
- Commercialisation ambitions
- Permeability of work between academia, industry and government
- Inter- and trans-disciplinarity collaboration
- More flexibility and capacity to respond to competitors from the private sector who may have considerable advantages over the public sector



# Is the Accord an Opportunity To Move Towards a Better Future?

- This Accord promises the most significant 'renovation' of policy since Dawkins' reforms in the late 1980s; new policy solutions
- There is potential to use the Accord as a moment to bring universities, unions and government together to ensure sustainable outcomes for the sector.
- Government: financial predictability and sufficient funding for more permanent positions; rethinking research careers and funding; light touch regulation to decrease workloads
- Unions/employees: greater flexibility; more reasonable redundancies in return for more permanent roles; recognition of value of a level of casualisation and contract; simpler EAs that support correct pay. Productivity in return for benefits
- Employers: work towards more permanent roles; take seriously issues of underpayment; engage with workload issues caused by hybrid work post-Covid
- This is the best opportunity we are likely to have this decade to try to find a new way of working that works for us all and allows the sector to thrive.



# Questions



Queensland Australia

**Make it matter**