17 October 2003

Professor Jenny Strong
President
Academic Board
The University of Queensland

Dear Jenny

Thank you for your invitation to comment on the report of the Review of the School of Engineering. I believe that this was an effective review and from a research perspective, should be broadly endorsed. I especially endorse the recommendation concerning new areas of research strength within mechanical engineering and that industry links be utilised to build strength in civil engineering. I also endorse recommendations concerning mining engineering. UQ can and should be the premier institution for mining engineering and minerals processing. Our chemical engineering is already strong and materials engineering is growing rapidly.

However, I cannot accept Recommendations 6 and 7. Recommendation 6 refers to the reinstatement of Faculty centres as School centres. This may well be both possible and desirable in some cases, but there should not be any element of compulsion about the matter. The University has procedures and mechanisms for the establishment and disestablishment of centres and these are the mechanisms that should be used. At least some of the Faculty centres with EPSA are extremely strong and their activity should not be disrupted by a compulsory change, and especially one that by-passes already established procedures.

Similarly, I cannot accept Recommendation 7 that there be no new Faculty centres. As you know, I work closely with researchers in the establishment of centres and will not endorse a proposal for a Faculty unless there are strong multidisciplinary grounds for doing so. Thus, there are already sufficient means in place to ensure that Faculty centres are created only when the value add can be demonstrated. A recent example is the High Performance Polymer Centre that was established as a School centre. It would simply be bad practice for the University to state baldly that no new Faculty centres would be created in EPSA.

I am more than happy to discuss this further with Standing Committee should you think that desirable.

Yours sincerely

David Siddle
Deputy Vice- Chancellor (Research)

Copy to: Professor P Greenfield, Senior Deputy Vice-Chancellor
Professor M Keniger, Executive Dean, Faculty of EPSA