



historycouncilnsw



Committee Secretary

**Senate Education and Employment Legislation Committee**

PO Box 6100,

Parliament House

Canberra ACT 2600

Dear Secretary,

**Higher Education Support Amendment (Job-Ready Graduates and Supporting Regional and Remote Students) Bill 2020**

The four state History Councils (New South Wales, South Australia, Victoria and Western Australia) welcome this opportunity to make a submission to the Inquiry on this Bill that the Senate has referred to your Committee.

The History Councils are the peak bodies for history in these four states, with the shared objective of furthering historical literacy and awareness and inspiring public engagement with the past, their identity and the world today. Our *Value of History Statement* may be consulted at: [https://www.historycouncilvic.org.au/value\\_of\\_history](https://www.historycouncilvic.org.au/value_of_history). The History Councils include representatives from cultural and educational institutions and heritage bodies; history teachers and curriculum advisors; academic and professional historians; and local, Indigenous, community and specialist history organisations.

The History Councils have already expressed our views on the proposed changes to the funding of Humanities courses via correspondence with many members of the Senate.

In addition, the History Councils have previously contributed to the Department of Education, Skills and Employment's consultation on an exposure draft of the Bill. We expressed our opposition to the proposed increase in the cost of Humanities degrees and our concern at the underpinning argument (that Humanities courses do not produce "job-ready" graduates). Our contributions are appended to this submission.

Our key arguments are relevant to your current Inquiry:

- Recent Australian and international studies provide evidence for the importance of Humanities education in all fields of employment.

- Study of the Humanities, and especially of History, equips graduates with developed and employable skills to make judgments about complex issues on the basis of conflicting evidence, to express complicated ideas clearly and to interrogate the bases of human behaviour. These skill-sets are practical and transferable. They apply in at least two domains:
  - Skills in research, analysis of differing points of view, critical reading and the clear communication of an evidence-based position.
  - Skills enabling graduates to work harmoniously and productively with people from diverse cultural and disciplinary backgrounds. The study of History produces an open mindedness, social awareness and broad perspective much needed in the forecast growth areas of education, health, construction and science and technology, and across the society and economy.
- Adjustment to course fees is a weak instrument with which to attempt to influence course selection.
- Fee increases may dissuade students from studying History at a time when we can hardly over-estimate the civic importance of a perspective which emphasizes cultural understanding, careful judgement, flexibility of outlook and respect for difference.

We endorse the submissions already presented to your Inquiry by the Australasian Council of Deans of Arts, Social Sciences and Humanities (submission #30), the Australian Historical Association (#21), the Australian Museums and Galleries Association (#14), the Council for Humanities, Arts and Social Sciences (#15) and the Professional Historian Association (#3).

**We recommend that the Bill not be passed in its current form, and that the Australian government allocate time for a fresh, evidence-based reappraisal of funding arrangements for university courses.**

Respectfully submitted on behalf of the History Councils of Australia,

by

Dr Stephen Gapps  
President, History Council of New South Wales  
[stephen.gapps@gmail.com](mailto:stephen.gapps@gmail.com)

10 September 2020



**historycouncilnsw**

17 August 2020

The Hon Dan Tehan MP  
Minister for Education  
PO Box 6022  
House of Representatives  
Parliament House  
Canberra ACT 2600

**Submission on the exposure draft for the Higher Education Support Amendment (Job-ready Graduates and Supporting Regional and Remote Students) Bill 2020**

The History Council of New South Wales is pleased to take up this opportunity to make a submission on the exposure draft for the Higher Education Support Amendment (Job-ready Graduates and Supporting Regional and Remote Students) Bill 2020.

We strongly oppose the proposed increase in the cost of Humanities degrees, including degrees in History, the price of which would more than double for students. We particularly resist the contention that these majors do not produce “job-ready” graduates. No evidence is produced to support this claim, and much is available to contradict it.

The opening statement of the “Job-ready Graduates Discussion Paper” (p. 3) reads “A strong economic recovery will depend on knowledge-intensive jobs held by Australians who are highly skilled, creative and flexible.” On this point we do agree, wholeheartedly, and we know that History graduates hold just these attributes.

The study of history equips graduates with valuable sets of skills in at least two domains. The first is a set of practical transferable skills in research, analysis of differing points of view, critical reading and the clear communication of an evidence-based position. The other skill set prepares history graduates to work harmoniously and productively with people from diverse cultural and disciplinary backgrounds. The study of history produces an open mindedness, social awareness and broad perspective much needed in the forecast growth areas of education, health, construction and science and technology, and across the society and economy.

To quote the History Council of Victoria submission, with which we concur: “The proposed fee increases are an extraordinary and unprecedented initiative to dissuade students from studying History at a time when we can hardly over-estimate the civic importance of a perspective which emphasizes cultural understanding, careful judgement, flexibility of outlook and respect for difference. In a multi-cultural society in a globalising world, that is fundamental.”



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Adjustment to the cost of courses is a weak instrument with which to attempt to influence course selection, as students are buffered in the short term by the HECS system of delayed payment. However, in the longer term, a more costly degree will mean that they have less take home pay and cannot get on with their lives as homeowners and parents as quickly as they otherwise would and as governments would want their citizens to do. Humanities could become the preserve of the better off rather than a viable option for all with the interest and talent to pursue this demanding area of study. Just as importantly it creates perverse incentives which undermine students' right to a free and fair choice in their studies.

We recommend that rather than reducing public funding and so dramatically increasing the percentage of costs of tertiary education borne by individual students, the government commit to higher levels of funding for the sector, to place it on a similar footing to primary and secondary education as a public good which is available to all for the benefit of the whole society.

Yours faithfully,

Dr Stephen Gapps  
**President, History Council of NSW**

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MEDIA RELEASE FROM THE HISTORY COUNCIL OF SOUTH AUSTRALIA

25 June 2020



## AUSTRALIA NEEDS MORE HUMANITIES AND SOCIAL SCIENCE GRADUATES

The History Council of South Australia has expressed its extreme disappointment to learn of the Morrison government's proposal to more than double the cost of a university education for History students in particular, and for students of the Humanities Arts and Social Sciences (HASS) in general.

Plans announced by Education Minister Dan Tehan last Friday 19 June 2020 will drastically reduce the Commonwealth Government's contribution from \$6652 to \$1100 per student place. HASS students' annual fee will more than double – it will increase from \$6804 to \$14,500.

Dr Skye Krichauff, President of the History Council of South Australia, said "This decision demonstrates a complete lack of understanding of the vital importance of History and other HASS disciplines. Skills gained through studying HASS disciplines include critical and creative thinking, ethics, research skills and an ability to construct a logical and coherent argument as well as skills in written and oral communication".

"Evidence shows that these are foundational skills that are highly valued by employers, and that many successful Australian companies rely on 'skills mixing' – bringing together HASS skills with science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM)," said Dr Krichauff.

"In the current era of disinformation and 'fake news', providing future generations with the skills to critique sources, analyse content and identify motives is essential for the health of our society and our political system."

The History Council of South Australia notes the irony that Tehan himself studied humanities, as did many successful politicians including three recent Prime Ministers, namely Julia Gillard, Kevin Rudd and Malcolm Turnbull.

A paper produced by the Australian Government's Workforce Gender Equality Agency provides clear data that women make up a high proportion of students studying HASS subjects. As such, this proposal severely disadvantages women.<sup>1</sup> And, as Dr Krichauff points out, "For genuine reconciliation between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal Australians to occur, a well informed knowledge of our colonial history and its enduring implications is essential".

"For Australians to contextualise, understand and devise solutions for the uncertain future that confronts our own and successive generations, more Humanities and Social Science graduates are required, not fewer," said Dr Krichauff. "The History Council of South Australia urges Minister Tehan and the Federal Government to rethink this punitive and short-sighted funding model."

The History Council of South Australia is peak history advocacy body in South Australia, providing a representative voice on historical issues, celebrating and raising the profile of history across the state.

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History Council of South Australia: <https://www.historycouncilsa.org.au/>

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<sup>1</sup> Australian Government, Workplace Gender Equality Agency, 'Higher education enrolments and graduate labour market statistics':

<https://www.wgea.gov.au/data/fact-sheets/higher-education-enrolments-and-graduate-labour-market-statistics>

**Exposure draft for the Higher Education Support Amendment (Job-ready Graduates and Supporting Regional and Remote Students) Bill 2020.**

Submission from History Council of Victoria  
By email to: [Hereform@dese.gov.au](mailto:Hereform@dese.gov.au)

The History Council of Victoria welcomes this opportunity to make a submission on the exposure draft for the Higher Education Support Amendment (Job-ready Graduates and Supporting Regional and Remote Students) Bill 2020.

In particular, the Council expresses its opposition to the proposed increase in the cost of Humanities degrees. [We note in passing that History has in fact disappeared altogether from the new funding clusters envisaged by the legislation (p. 18 of the “Job-ready Graduates Discussion Paper”).]

The Minister has explicitly justified the increases in the costs of Humanities courses because – Languages aside – they do not produce “job-ready” graduates. Our argument is that the Minister and the “Job-ready Graduates Discussion Paper” have failed to produce evidence for this claim.

On the contrary, we argue for the special place of the Humanities, and especially History, in equipping students with developed and employable skills to make judgments about complex issues on the basis of conflicting evidence, to express complicated ideas clearly and to interrogate the bases of human behaviour.

The History Council of Victoria endorses the opening statement of the “Job-ready Graduates Discussion Paper” (p. 3) that “A strong economic recovery will depend on knowledge-intensive jobs held by Australians who are highly skilled, creative and flexible.”

Our national Academy of the Humanities has pointed in detail to the employment of Humanities graduates in teaching, the public service, the arts and recreation. Humanities are the fibre of so much of the innovation, creativity and joy in our culture.

Humanities graduates make careers, even if not in as linear a way as other graduates. The Minister’s stated contrast in the outcomes of STEM and Humanities education flies in the face of evidence from here and overseas.

In 2012 the Gillard government funded the Securing Australia’s Future project to be delivered by ACOLA, the Australian Council of Learned Academies (Science, Social Sciences, Humanities, and Technology and Engineering).

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Chief Scientist Ian Chubb, then Alan Finkel and Michael Barber oversaw eleven multidisciplinary projects ranging from new technologies to education and regional engagement. The eleven project reports were completed in 2017 under the Abbott government.

The final report identified education as one of the five “golden threads” running through the eleven projects, emphasizing both the importance of STEM and of ensuring the excellence of every branch of education.

In particular, the project on “skills and capabilities for Australian enterprise innovation” conducted interviews with managers of the most innovative enterprises in Australia and found them characterized by “people and teams with a mix of skills” and “broad knowledge bases”, including the Humanities.

Overseas quantitative analysis supports this view. In 2013 a US survey of 318 businesses with 25 or more employees showed that nearly all of them thought that the ability to “think critically, communicate clearly, and solve complex problems”—the precise objectives of a Humanities education—was more important than a job candidate's specific major.

The chief executive officers of 30 mostly high-tech companies in Canada — ranging from IBM and Xerox to Motorola— have issued a statement noting that many of their workers began their education in the Humanities.

In their words, “This was time well spent, not squandered. They have increased their value to our companies, our economy, our culture and themselves, by acquiring the level of cultural and civic literacy that the humanities offer.”

The proposed fee increases are an extraordinary and unprecedented initiative to dissuade students from studying History at a time when we can hardly over-estimate the civic importance of a perspective which emphasizes cultural understanding, careful judgement, flexibility of outlook and respect for difference. In a multi-cultural society in a globalising world, that is fundamental.

The Minister of Education would do better to encourage students to embrace their academic interests – whatever they are – with verve and enthusiasm. We urge him to do so.

Yours faithfully,

**(Emeritus Professor) Peter McPhee AM FAHA FASSA**

Chair, History Council of Victoria

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14 August 2020

13 August 2020

## **Submission on the exposure draft for Higher Education Support Amendment (Job-ready Graduates and Supporting Regional and Remote Students) Bill 2020**

### **AUSTRALIA NEEDS MORE HUMANITIES & SOCIAL SCIENCE GRADUATES**

The History Council of Western Australia was shocked to learn that the Morrison government proposes to more than double the cost of a university education for students in History. What is the justification for reducing the Commonwealth Government's contribution to only \$1100 per student place? Or for the requirement that History students will now pay an annual fee of \$14,500?

'This decision is extraordinarily short sighted and does not bode well for the future of our society', says Emeritus Professor Jenny Gregory AM, President of the History Council of Western Australia. It displays a complete lack of understanding of the vital importance of History and other disciplines in the Humanities and Social Sciences (HASS). These areas have produced outstanding graduates for many years – including many of Australia's political leaders.

Evidence shows that HASS skills — critical and creative thinking, ethics, research skills, ability to construct a logical and coherent argument, as well as skills in written and oral communication — are foundational skills that are highly valued by employers. Evidence also shows that many successful Australian companies rely on 'skills mixing', bringing together HASS skills with science, engineering and mathematics (STEM).

We note too that this proposal severely disadvantages women. There is clear data showing that women make up a high proportion of students studying HASS subjects.

This country needs more Humanities and Social Science graduates not less. The History Council of WA urges the Minister to rethink this punitive funding model.

**Emeritus Professor Jenny Gregory AM FRHS,  
President, History Council of Western Australia**

#### [About the History Council](#)

As the peak body representing history in Western Australia, our purpose is to advance the practice and place of history at all levels and in all settings and to advocate historical interests on behalf of the whole community.

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The History Council of Western Australia is registered as a charity with the Australian Charities and Not-for-profits Commission

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