



Professional Historians Australia (Qld) Inc.
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***RE: EXPOSURE DRAFT FOR HIGHER EDUCATION SUPPORT AMENDMENT
(JOB-READY GRADUATES AND SUPPORTING REGIONAL AND REMOTE
STUDENTS) BILL 2020***

Professional Historians Association (Qld) Inc. opposes the Federal Government's proposal to adjust student funding for tertiary education in Society and Culture qualifications including Social Studies, Political Science, Behavioural Science, History and Philosophy. The proposed adjustment represents a substantial increase in tuition fees paid by the student for these qualifications, making it more difficult for Australians to access higher educational opportunities.

WHO WE ARE

Professional Historians Association (Qld) Inc. represents over eighty professionally accredited historians within Queensland, about twenty per cent of whom live and work in regional areas. Our members are employed in the arts & culture, economic, education, government, legal, medical, and tourism industries. Their knowledge and skills developed through studying history at tertiary level are used daily and inform their contributions in the workplace. Their work spans diverse modes, from researching and writing articles, books, conservation management plans, and significance statements, to curating exhibitions, delivering public lectures, recording oral histories, managing cultural organisations and collections, and providing expert advice to public and private sector clients.

SOCIETY AND CULTURE: THE CHOICE OF INDUSTRY LEADERS

Professional Historians Association (Qld) Inc. is concerned that by preparing universities for growth of STEM and nursing qualifications and increasing the costs of other disciplines, that a profound skills deficiency will emerge in the future. Study of tertiary level Society and Culture subjects provides far more than a discrete knowledge base. The core learnings of many of these courses are the ability to think critically, interpret data analytically, and respond to information rationally. These skills are applicable in many key positions across the government and corporate sector and are essential for high-level positions such as Chief Officers and Directors. The maintenance of an affordable fee structure on Society and Culture courses will ensure that Australians have an opportunity to enhance their leadership skills and contribute enthusiastically to our nation's ongoing development.

Further to this, at subject-level, students enrolled in other disciplines, especially, Law and Economics, Architecture, and the Creative Arts often study Society and Culture subjects as electives. Their study of these subjects provides a well-rounded education, which they can then apply to their core areas of employment. The best promotion of cross-disciplinary education is to ensure future students can afford to access these opportunities and develop a more informed knowledge base.

SOCIETY AND CULTURE: A PHILANTHROPIC SUCCESS STORY

The study of Society and Culture at tertiary level is key to unlocking appreciation in Australian culture and will ensure that new opportunities are available to Australians in years to come. Individuals who have a thorough knowledge and appreciation of our nation's story are known for their generous support of Australia's educational and creative institutions. Their philanthropy activates our national story through grants, prizes, scholarships, bursaries, and fellowships, and ensures that our nation continues to generate some of the most dynamic and entrepreneurial educational and creative outcomes seen globally. Many of these individuals developed their enthusiasm for Australia's story by studying Society and Culture at tertiary level and reinvest in educational and creative organisations to ensure further achievement by emerging Australian leaders.

SOCIETY AND CULTURE: A PATHWAY FOR ALL STUDENTS

Having observed the value that Society and Culture qualifications brings to professional and corporate leadership, Professional Historians Association (Qld) Inc. strongly advocates the inclusion of a cornerstone course in Australian culture and history in all undergraduate degree pathways at Australian universities. The study of 60,000+ years of Australian history and culture will develop a more culturally sensitive community who are able to dynamically respond to emerging social, cultural and political issues, and contribute to discussions around public policy with mature awareness. Indeed, many senior public sector employees and politicians owe their skills in critically considering our nation's advancement to their own tertiary-level Society and Culture qualifications.

A FAIR GO: KEEPING EDUCATION AFFORDABLE

We understand that in recent years, a financial deficit has been incurred in the cost of studying Society and Culture qualifications, and the revised fee structure is more reflective of the cost of tertiary education in today's world. That taken into account, increasing the student contribution by nearly 110% and decreasing the Commonwealth's contribution by almost 84% will ensure that some Australians who intend on studying Society and Culture qualifications as a part of their degree pathway will simply be unable to do so due to perilous financial burden.

Making pathways to Society and Culture qualifications financially unviable will have a deleterious effect on the proposed reforms aim to produce an agile, focussed, innovative, informed, and efficient, job-ready workforce. Professional Historians Association (Qld) Inc. strongly advocates for fundamentally affordable tertiary education. Additionally, the Association supports the proposals to reduce the FEE-HELP loan fee for undergraduate students from 25 per cent to 20 per cent and provide funding opportunities for IRLS students. These measures will ensure students of all socio-economic backgrounds across Australia may unlock employment prospects that only tertiary qualifications can provide. To use a fond Australian expression, it will give every student a fair go.

SUMMARY

Professional Historians Association (Qld) Inc. urges the Government to review the Amendment Bill's proposed fee structure; implement fairer funding bands that do not see students incurring daunting debt to attain tertiary qualifications; and take action to ensure that Australia's Society and Culture is a key component of all Australian degree pathways. Put simply, education should remain accessible and affordable for all Australians.



Timothy Roberts

President

Professional Historians Association (Qld) Inc.