



Quaker Peace & Legislation Committee

ACTION ALERT AA 20:05 - Higher Education Support Amendment Bill 2020 – Inquiry

As Quakers we seek a world without war. We seek a sustainable and just community. We have a vision of an Australia that upholds human rights and builds peace internationally, with particular focus on our region. In our approach to government we will promote the importance of dialogue, of listening and of seeking that of God in every person. We aim to work for justice and to take away the occasion for war.

September 2020

URGENT

This Alert draws attention to the 3 September 2020 decision by the Senate to hold an Inquiry into the Government's *Higher Education Support Amendment (Job-Ready Graduates and Supporting Regional and Remote Students) Bill 2020*. Public submissions are due 10 September with the report due to the Senate Standing Committees on Education and Employment by 25 September.

ACTION – send an email!

Given the time constraints, Friends are encouraged to make their views known by emailing members of the Committee, and/or to individual MPs or Senators in your state/territory (see link to contact details in Resources below). If you are able to send a submission prior to the 10 September deadline, we encourage you to do so. Information about making submissions and how to upload them, as well as the Committee's contact details can be found at :

https://www.aph.gov.au/Parliamentary_Business/Committees/Senate/Education_and_Employment/JobReadyGraduates

Senate Standing Committees on Education and Employment (Legislation Committee members):

- Senator the Hon James McGrath (Chair) Liberal, QLD.
senator.mcgrath@aph.gov.au
- Senator the Hon Louise Pratt (Deputy Chair) Labor, WA
senator.pratt@aph.gov.au
- Senator the Hon Perin Davey, Nationals, NSW
senator.davey@aph.gov.au
- Senator the Hon Mehreen Faruqi, Greens, NSW
senator.faruqi@aph.gov.au
- Senator the Hon Deborah O'Neill, Labor NSW
senator.o'neill@aph.gov.au
- Senator the Hon Matt O'Sullivan, Liberal, WA
senator.matt.o'sullivan@aph.gov.au

The Hon Dan Tehan MP, Minister for Education – dan.tehan.mp@aph.gov.au

Senator the Hon Michaelia Cash, Minister for Employment, Skills, Small and Family Business – senator.cash@aph.gov.au

The Hon Tanya Plibersek MP Shadow Minister for Education and Training – tanya.plibersek.mp@aph.gov.au

Don't worry about whether or not you get a response - this is a numbers game, more emails indicate that more constituents are watching this process.

TIPS

- Ask for one action
- Say something about yourself – especially if you are part of the MP's or Senator's constituency
- Say why you care about the issue – share the impact of this issue to you, your family, your community

The Bill's package

- Jointly announced by the Minister for Education and the Minister for Employment, Skills, Small and Family Business on 19 June 2020.
- University students who study in 'job-relevant' areas, as selected by the Government, will pay less for their degrees.
- The Government has stated that this bill will incentivise students to make more job-relevant decisions about what they want to study.
- The Government will also provide \$900 million for a National Priorities and Linkage fund to incentivise universities to produce 'job ready' graduates to meet the needs of local industries and employers.
- Students will pay less to study:
 - teaching, nursing, clinical psychology, English and languages (46% less)
 - agriculture and maths (62% less)
 - health, architecture, environmental science, IT and engineering (20% less)
- In August, adjustments were made to reduce student fees for social work and some psychology courses.
- Under this reform package, the cost of studying most humanities subjects at university will more than double.
- 'It means someone studying humanities or communications will be in the same fee bracket as law students' (ABC, 20 June 2020).
- Concerns have also been raised that humanities students will spend their entire careers paying for their debts.
- There are also concerns that students from diverse ethnic and socio-economic backgrounds will be forced, by economic necessity, to study only Government approved 'job ready' courses, leaving the students of wealthier backgrounds to fill humanities programs.
- While Universities Australia welcomed some parts of the reform package, it also stated that 'we will need to examine it closely... in order to understand the impact on our students including those in the humanities'.
- The Australian Academy of the Humanities raises several concerns with the package and states that '*The policy rationale for shifting students into areas that are 'job ready' or 'job-relevant' is disputed by the evidence from 2019 graduate outcomes data, that shows humanities graduates are in demand in sectors projected for substantial growth and outperform science and maths graduates in full-time employment and labour force participation*'. (AAH Submission).

Resources

- <https://ministers.dese.gov.au/tehan/job-ready-graduates-power-economic-recovery>
- <https://www.universitiesaustralia.edu.au/media-item/uni-reform-package-boosts-participation-but-further-study-of-detail-needed/>
- The Australian Academy of the Humanities August 2020 Submission to the Inquiry at https://www.humanities.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2020/08/200817-AAH-Policy-Job-Ready-Legislation_final.pdf
- ABC, 'Government's university fee changes mean humanities students will pay the entire cost of their degrees' Nassim Khadem, 20 June 2020, <https://www.abc.net.au/news/2020-06-20/study-arts-and-humanities-government-fees-tertiary-education/12374124>
- Australian Academy of the Humanities Media Release 'Humanities hit hardest when needed more than ever', 19 June 2020. <https://www.humanities.org.au/2020/06/19/humanities-hit-hardest-when-needed-more-than-ever/>
- <https://www.abc.net.au/news/2020-06-20/study-arts-and-humanities-government-fees-tertiary-education/12374124>
- Contacting Senators and Members: https://www.aph.gov.au/Senators_and_Members/Guidelines_for_Contacting_Senators_and_Members