



History Council of South Australia (HCSA)
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27 June 2024

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

Re: Job Ready Graduates Package

Dear Minister Clare,

I write to you today on behalf of the History Council of South Australia (HCSA) regarding the continuing deleterious effects of the differential student fees imposed by the Job Ready Graduates (JRG) package.

Last October at the National History Teachers' National Conference last October you paid tribute to your own history teacher who taught you 'to think, to question, to analyse and interpret.' I need not remind you of the enormous social, cultural and civic value of an education firmly anchored in humanities disciplines such as history. We live in a society in which our democracy and our capacity for reasoned public debate rests upon the analytical skills offered by just such an education.

In this letter, I want to remind you of two essential points. The first is that history graduates enjoy excellent employment prospects in socially useful professions. The second is that the current policy setting clearly discriminates against students from low income communities who wish to study and then work in humanities-related fields of employment.

On the first point, just this week the peak body Deans of Arts, Social Sciences and Humanities (DASSH) released a report confirming that 91% of Australian employers were satisfied with the skills of humanities, arts and social science graduates, while 90% of those graduates were in full time employment within three years of graduation. They are employed

in rewarding and well-paid jobs with an average salary of \$82 000 p.a. three years after graduating. Far from impractical avenues of study, history and associated humanities subjects offer clear pathways to employment. Accordingly, no-one should be discouraged from pursuing study in this area on the grounds of social utility or employability.

Despite history and humanities degrees offering excellent employment outcomes, graduates from certain humanities disciplines, particularly history remain subject to a punitive, arguably ideological penalty in the shape of a grossly distorted fee structure that sees them pay up to twice the fees of some of their fellow students. The perpetuation of this unbalanced fee structure is all the more surprising, given that Australian Universities Accord Final Report from February this year stated clearly that the JRG package's 'purpose of providing price signals to influence student subject choices has failed' and has only led to increased student debt burdens for the students it unfairly targets (p.4). This distorted debt burden reflects neither the costs associated with a history education, nor does it serve any civic need to artificially suppress the numbers of history graduates. It simply imposes disproportionate debt in a way that discourages those from low income and marginalised communities, already baulking at high student debt levels, from pursuing degrees in areas in which they have a natural aptitude and interest.

The History Council of South Australia urges the government to scrap this unfair tariff on history education and move towards a higher education fee structure that does not penalise those who would become the next generation of history graduates. We look forward to congratulating you in the near future when, we hope, the JRG package itself becomes history.

With best regards,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Matthew Fitzpatrick', written in a cursive style.

(Professor) Matthew Fitzpatrick

President, History Council of South Australia