



INDEPENDENT SCHOLARS ASSOCIATION OF AUSTRALIA INC

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The Hon. Dan Tehan MP
Minister for Education
House of Representatives
Parliament House
Canberra ACT 2600

Dear Minister Tehan

The Value of Formal Education in the Humanities

The Independent Scholars Association of Australia Inc. (ISAA) was founded in 1995 as an Australian-wide association for the promotion of scholarship. ISAA members include academics and scholars from engineering, medicine, sciences, arts, administration, law, economics and diplomacy. This diverse membership demonstrates the vitality of intercourse between the humanities and the sciences in understanding who and where we are, where we are going and how to get there.

ISAA urges reconsideration of the proposed new tertiary financing plan. The humanities streams are legitimate and invaluable in the formation of the critical consciousness, which is essential to meet the challenges ahead.

The use of price signals to favour one area of study over another is rejected by ISAA. Considering the humanities an 'indulgence', is to ignore the vital role a humanities education plays as a component of a multitude of professions in school education, business, law, social work and the arts. In fact, the education sector, which has been flagged as essential to Australia's future, is the single biggest destination for humanities graduates, based on employees working in that sector holding a humanities degree as their highest qualification according to the 2016 ABS census. ISAA is also concerned about the disproportionate impact on women of the large fee increases in humanities, social sciences, media and communications, given women represent about 67% in these fields.

It is well understood by employers that a humanities education can be the foundation for success in a number of fields vital to Australia's economic and social wellbeing. ISAA believes that the proposed new tertiary financing plan is severely short-sighted and reveals a lack of understanding of the vital importance of humanities training for the employees of tomorrow. It is unnecessarily punitive and displays a remarkably narrow view of the very purpose of a tertiary education that promotes critical inquiry and critical thinking, creativity, ethics and communication.

It is ironic that a policy ostensibly designed to bolster student numbers in science-based courses has no empirical support. Decisions taken without any empirical basis are likely to have unintended consequences, including failure to achieve the stated objective. It is also ironic that this decision has been taken by the government which has ignored science in such crucial areas as climate, energy, water, and the NBN. Students are more likely to be encouraged to do science if they see government take notice of it, instead of treating it with disdain.

We therefore request your urgent reconsideration of the proposed new tertiary financing plan.

Christine Yeats
President
Independent Scholars Association of Australia
C.C. The Hon Tanya Plibersek MP Shadow Minister for Education and Training