



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,

Government Support for Universities

The Independent Scholars Association of Australia Inc. (ISAA) has a diverse membership and wide purpose that give ISAA a knowledge and capacity for informed judgment in higher education matters.

The sudden loss of much international student revenue due to Covid-19 has been a disaster for the university sector, and has already led to thousands of academic staff cuts and will continue to lead to much changed teaching, research and study conditions in universities. Also, the Job-ready Graduates legislation, passed by Parliament in October, raises many problems and issues concerning the future of higher education in Australia, as the assumptions on which it rests do not allow for the complexity of the issues and some of the likely effects.

We urge you and the government constantly to monitor the legislation on higher education, for its detrimental effects on wider Australian society and for failure to achieve its stated objectives. There is a definite threat that the quality of both teaching and research in our universities will deteriorate, and that their current high international standing will be affected. There is also concern that opportunities for economically and otherwise disadvantaged groups will be reduced, with a corresponding lack of employment possibilities.

Over recent decades government policies on both sides have been directed to making universities financially more self-supporting. Universities responded willingly to the policies and successfully sought other sources of revenue, but they became very dependent upon funding from overseas students. One Vice-Chancellor wrote recently in *The Australian*: “international growth has all but been forced on the sector”, pointing to a significant degree of government responsibility for the situation confronting universities. It was also pointed out that Australia is now ranked 21st in the OECD when it comes to university funding. In order to enable universities to fulfil the role in society envisaged by government, business and the Australian community, it is imperative that universities receive a positive attitude from government and that they are adequately funded to meet these expectations and responsibilities, especially in disruptive circumstances.

We therefore request your serious and sustained consideration of these matters.

Yours sincerely

Professor Shirley Randell AO, PhD
President
Independent Scholars Association of Australia
cc. The Hon. Tanya Plibersek MP, Shadow Minister for Education and Training