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**SUBMISSION TO THE VET STUDENT LOANS SENATE ENQUIRY**

I would like to express my serious concerns about the VET Student Loans Bill, currently before parliament.

I understand the need to keep the system honest and stop fraudulent activity, yet this Bill is throwing the baby out with the bath water – it is far too restrictive in the number of eligible courses available. We should be giving every Australian the opportunity to improve their skills and opportunity through education. This bill does the opposite.

Choosing which courses get support, based purely on which disciplines are most in demand for employment today, is not forward looking. It does not prepare the workforce for the jobs of tomorrow, for the jobs that don't even exist yet. Diversity of skills are essential to that preparation. Courses that develop communication, critical thinking and creativity are just as important as those that deliver technical skills.

We need to recognise that fact and act on it, in the way we fund our education system.

These are not handouts, these are loans. If the concern is that loans will not be paid back, then that should be legislated. Otherwise this bill appears simply designed to limit education possibilities in Australia.

The proposed model is a short-term approach. It simply offers minimal support for previously in-demand qualifications. It has no future vision. It ignores the future requirements of our economy and will also cause significant job losses across valuable parts of the private education sector.

Sincerely,

PJ Collins

Leader of the Arts Party

[www.artsparty.org](http://www.artsparty.org)