
**Committee Secretary
Senate Education and Employment Committees
Parliament House
Canberra, ACT**

September 16, 2014

I write to make a submission regarding the *Higher Education and Research Reform Amendment Bill 2014* inquiry.

1. My name is Chris Jervis and I am a self-supported, part-time university student. I currently attend Monash University in Melbourne. I write in a private capacity, as a concerned student, voter and Australian citizen.
2. I pay my university fees upfront with the earnings from my full-time job. I have not deferred payment for any amount of my education using HECS/HELP. The financial burden is already significant, but in the pursuit of a better life for myself, and for the ability to make a greater contribution to society, I undertake this burden myself and consider it a worthwhile endeavor.
3. The proposed deregulation of tertiary fees exposes me to increases in the cost of my current degree program. Additionally, it may increase the cost associated with the plans I have for future higher education. I have seen the media report on credible figures in the higher education sector signaling that fee increases are more likely to be the result of this reform than not. To say I am concerned is an understatement.
4. It is my belief that Australia is significantly better for having a well-educated population. Education can empower the disenfranchised, refines and improves the already capable and a well-educated population pays material dividends to the nation. As a voter, I believe it should be an essential role of the government to facilitate a better-educated society.
5. I believe, on the balance, the proposed reforms will capriciously price some people out of an education. Furthermore, it will put those who do have the means to cover their education under increased and immense pressure. The overall effect will make the prospect of an education difficult and unattractive to many. As a student, I stand as an anecdotal example. This is not good for me. This is not good for the nation.
6. I appreciate that any education comes at a significant cost. The objective of the government should be to facilitate a well-educated society, not bear absolute responsibility for it. Hence, I think Australians have been well served by HECS/HELP in conjunction with the regulation of fees in a way which is

advantageous to the public - not institutions seeking academic prestige, increased global ranking or attractive marketing angles such as low student-to-tutor ratios.

7. I believe Australia's public universities already produce high quality graduates in droves. I reject the government's assertion to the contrary, simply because Australia does not have an institution which competes with private institutions in the United States and Britain, with respect to certain global rankings. It almost entirely ignores the fact that these institutions, while academically excellent, are elite and exclusionary places, which are out of reach to most people. Emulating this within our public universities is not in the greater public interest.

8. I confidently state that I will be materially worse off and face immense difficulties in my pursuit of education, should the proposed reforms deliver increased tuition fees, as is entirely possible, if not likely.

Yours sincerely,

Chris Jervis