

Dear Senators and Ministers,

I wish to object in the strongest way possible to the proposed funding changes and blow out in the cost of tertiary education currently being touted in parliament.

Ladies and gentlemen, you are sadly out of touch with the reality up and coming students face in Australia today. To create an even greater two tiered university structure is an absolute disgrace. As a former Monash University staff member, I have seen first hand the destabilisation to staff and researchers that was caused by the dumping of our regional campus by Monash, and then subsequent merger with the former University of Ballarat. The further deregulation and drop in funding will put our RUN network in an even more precarious position and therefore our regional kids also. They deserve the exact same standard of tertiary education as their city cousins and should not be help ransom to sub standard degrees due to lack of equal footing with Group of Eight or other universities in the city.

I also am outraged at the new funding model used to replace the old HECS/HELPS system. I agree degrees cannot be free, however, to tie the cost with government bonds rates over 10 years is indeed a travesty. Students will be left saddled with massive US style university loans that will take 10-20 years to pay off if they are lucky. I doubt potential employers will be eager to raise wages to help these young graduates pay this monstrous imposition. Minister Pyne and co, did you have to pay for **your** degree? The treasurer says the days of entitlement are over, but all this will do is turn students away from degrees, especially if their wages at the end won't make ends meet once the loan payments come out. Australia will no longer be a clever country. Many will sadly have to turn down university placements as the rewards at the end are dimmed by this hideous cost. So you say you have made commonwealth scholarships broader and more generous to counteract this. Not everyone will be able to apply for and obtain one of these new scholarships, even if they are better, which I cannot see myself.

Please do not play uni of against uni, or doom lower and even middle class students to a life of huge loans for little reward. I myself have a science degree and I can tell you my wage is not proportional to the difficulty of my degree. We do not need a US style system, which they themselves are trying to fix as we speak. (I recently read they are looking at abolishing their system and wiping students debts... so why impose such a structure here?) Please use sense and not ideology to fund our tertiary sector, and a fair and equitable education for all, not just the elite or wealthy.

Regards

Catherine Chambers