

## **Inquiry: The Higher Education Support Amendment (Reverse Job-Ready Graduates Fee Hikes and End 50k Arts Degrees) Bill 2025**

Submitter:

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I thank the committee for the opportunity to contribute to this inquiry. The timing of this Bill could not be more critical for the future of Australia's emerging writers and creative communicators.

I wish to draw the committee's attention to three key facts:

### **1. Future writers cannot afford course fees that are equivalent to Australian writers' annual earnings**

The cost of a creative writing or media and communications degree is now essentially equal to *three years of average earnings from writing* for an Australian writer (\$17,399 p.a. fees vs \$18,200 p.a. earnings). That average is skewed by a very few high-earning authors. Most writers earn far less. Self-funding a creative career is an increasingly dire struggle.

### **2. Use of AI is set to further reduce future earnings**

Macquarie University research has found that 70% of Australian writers "believe AI is likely to displace income-generating work for authors and illustrators" (<https://research-management.mq.edu.au/ws/portalfiles/portal/430968354/429438861.pdf>). *That belief will impact the choices that young people are making* about taking on such a significant debt for a creative education at this time.

### **3. JRG is already severely impacting creative training and the livelihoods of creative educators**

The current Jobs Ready Graduates model of university course fees is resulting in *sharply declining student enrolments in secondary and tertiary arts courses*, which are being cut around the country (Gattenhof et al. 2026: 'The Polycrisis for Arts and Creative Education in Australia'). This situation even further damages writers' and artists' prospects of earning a living from work that is related to their practice.

Prospective creative writing, arts and communication students now face not only a steep uphill battle to pay off the cost of a degree, **but they will do so in an environment where their ability to earn anything at all from practising their arts is severely at risk.**

As the Australian Society of Authors observes, "even a small disruption to income may mean the permanent loss of many professional writers, resulting in a contraction of authentic

*Australian voices, of unique Australian perspective and a future skills gap.*” (<https://www.asauthors.org.au/advocacy/artificial-intelligence/>)

**Most creative workers require training of some kind.** As an award-winning creative writer for over 30 years, I have benefitted enormously from a tertiary creative writing education. But as the daughter of a working-class, single-income family, I cannot say I would have chosen this path if faced with a \$50k+ debt to repay.

**Writers already substantially self-fund their practice.** This level of debt will make it untenable for emerging writers to take time off from paid jobs to write the literary works that are so critical to the future of reading and culture in Australia.

**The single most important step that the Albanese government can take to protect the future of creative writers and creative communicators is to roll back the JRG for the disciplines of Creative Writing, Creative Arts, Media and Communications without further delay.**

Literature and Language students pay a quarter of the course fee paid per annum by Creative Writing students. The fees paid by all writing and arts-related courses should be brought back into line with Literature and Language, which cost **\$4,738 p.a.** compared with **\$17,399 p.a.** for Creative Writing and Communications subjects.

If action is not taken now, we risk losing the next generation of creative writing students and teachers.

The current National Cultural Policy, *Revive*, recognises in its name the already parlous state of the arts in this country.

If the JRG remains in place for creative writing and communications courses beyond 2026, the next National Cultural Policy might as well be called *Resuscitate*.

**Recommendation:**

- 1. That the bill be passed.**