



Australian Council of Heads of Social Work Education Inc.

Mr Gerry McNally
Committee Secretary
The Senate Education and Employment Legislation Committee
eec.sen@aph.gov.au

Dear Mr McNally

Re: Higher Education Support Amendment (Response to the Australian Universities Accord Interim Report) Bill 2023 [Provisions]

The Australian Council of Heads of Social Work Education (ACHSWE) propose that the Senate Education and Employment Legislation Committee endorse the proposed legislation which would increase eligibility for places to First Nations students and remove the current requirement that students must pass 50 percent of the units they study to remain eligible for a Commonwealth Supported Place and FEE-HELP.

That the Government is seeking to address these issues, which have been highlighted in the recent *Australian Universities Accord Interim Report*, is to be applauded. However, the changes in legislation which are proposed need to be understood as just the first steps to addressing issues of access and participation on higher education.

The experience of members of the ACHSWE is that student poverty is a critical factor which needs to be addressed in any serious attempt to enable students to succeed in higher education. The proposed legislation places the onus on education providers to support students to successfully complete the units of study in which they are enrolled. Although education providers provide a wide range of supports to students, they are not in a position to provide the level of financial support which many students require to study. This is particularly so for students completing lengthy compulsory placements as part of their studies.

The ACHSWE has provided evidence to public consultations of the Australian Universities Accord on the impact of student poverty on students being able to successfully complete their studies, with a particular emphasis on mandatory placements. Copies of these submissions are attached.

Regards

Professor Beth Crisp,
President
16 August 2023