



**Inquiry into the quality of governance at Australian higher education providers**  
**Extra Questions on Notice | Senator Faruqi | 25 November 2025**

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**1. What proportion of Western Sydney University staff are on insecure contracts?**

Fixed-term contracts currently represent 9 per cent of Western Sydney University’s workforce.

**2. Does your institution have any partnerships, investments or links with any weapons companies or associated entities?**

The University’s investments are held through a unit trust with Mercer, with the underlying assets managed directly by Mercer rather than by the University.

The University is working with Mercer to ensure investments comply with its position on excluded investments which includes controversial weapons. This covers companies that manufacture whole weapons systems, components, delivery platforms or components that were developed or are significantly modified for exclusive use in cluster munitions, anti-personnel landmines, biological or chemical weapons.

The investment policy can be found [here](#).

**Investments:** Based on a sector exposure analysis provided by Mercer, 5.7 per cent of the University’s total investment is exposed to weapons companies.

**Partnerships:** The University developed a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with Lockheed Martin Australia in 2025. This MOU does not include any commercial relationships, although it may lead to collaborative innovation work. The MOU framework is directed at supporting student activity and research that will support the Australian Air Force C130J transport aircraft, not combat aircraft. It does not relate to any weapons research and/or manufacturing.

The University has had engagements with Quickstep, a manufacturer of carbon fibre composite structures for the aerospace and defence sector. To the best of our knowledge, the only formal contract engagement undertaken with Quickstep was the provision of training through the NSW Government’s Industry Skills Accelerator program.

**Research**

Entity	Western Sydney Funding Body Name	\$ Research
BAE Systems	BAE Systems Australia Limited	\$778,125
Northrop Grumman	Northrop Grumman Corporation	\$63,100

Raytheon	Raytheon Australia Pty Ltd	\$74,451
Thales	Thales Australia Limited	\$1,206,296
QINETIQ	QINETIQ PTY LTD	\$863,069

**3. Does your institution have any partnerships, investments or links with any fossil fuel companies or associated entities?**

The University's investment approach is guided by a formal Investment Policy, which contains a clear set of exclusions that Mercer is contractually required to comply with. These exclusions are based on ethical considerations, specifically where products or services have a significant negative impact on society and/or the environment. The University also ensures that all investments comply with Australian Law and relevant Sanctions Law.

Relevant exclusions clauses in the Investment Policy are:

**Investment Policy Clause (48)**

The University consciously applies an allocation within its investment portfolio to Sustainable labelled funds. This helps to achieve greater outcomes in relation to the University's ESG objectives. In addition to the exclusions listed above, the Sustainable labelled funds minimise exposure to companies that derive greater than 5 per cent revenue from the extraction of thermal coal and/or oil/tar sands. These funds also limit exposure to companies whose business activities derive greater than 50 per cent revenue from Adult Entertainment, Alcohol and Gambling.

**Investment Policy Clause (49)**

The University's Funds Managers report annually to the Finance and Investment Committee in relation to the investment portfolio's compliance with the University's ESG framework, including excluded investments.

Based on a sector exposure analysis provided by Mercer, 14.9 per cent of the University's total investment is exposed to fossil fuel companies.

**4. Does your institution have any partnerships, investments or links with any gambling companies or associated entities?**

Based on Mercer's sector exposure analysis, 2.2 per cent of our total investment is exposed to gambling companies.

**5. Does your institution have any partnerships, investments or links with any tobacco companies or associated entities?**

No specific investment exposure has been identified in tobacco or associated entities

**6. Four years down the line from the Job Ready Graduates (JRG) fee hikes, what impacts are you seeing?**

Australia Institute research in 2023 shows that in 2021, the first year of JRG, students across the nation paid an estimated \$414 million in additional fees, an average increase of 8 per cent. At the same time, universities received \$1 billion less in Commonwealth Grant Scheme funding, a 15 per cent decline.

Innovative Research Universities points to data from the Australian Centre for Student Equity and Success that shows a 10.6 per cent decline in students from low socio-economic backgrounds at university in 2023 compared to 2017. The data also covers a period prior to the introduction of the JRG.

In 2023 compared to 2017, there was also a 15.5 per cent drop in first-in-family students, and a 19.3 per cent drop in students from non-English-speaking backgrounds. Regional and remote students were down 13.9 per cent. However, the number of students with a disability and the number of Indigenous students has risen.

**a. Do you agree that the government should urgently scrap the JRG fee hikes and funding cuts?**

Western Sydney University has strongly and consistently argued for the Job-ready Graduates policy to be scrapped as soon as possible. Vice-Chancellor, Distinguished Professor George Williams AO has labelled it one of the top five worst national public policy mistakes made in the last two decades.

This ill-conceived initiative has introduced deep inequity and unfairness into the nation's higher education system, especially for Arts and Humanities students who now face spiralling costs of more than \$50,000 for a three-year degree.

The impact of the JRG continues to unequally fall on students from low socio-economic backgrounds and underrepresented groups such as Indigenous and first in family students who commonly undertake Arts degrees as an entry into university.

Not only are students weighed down with higher fees and a lifetime of debt, but many are now dissuaded from going to university at all at the very time the nation needs more students to enrol in higher education to strengthen social cohesion, improve critical thinking as AI use grows, and to achieve the Australian Universities Accord ambitions.