

Dear Member of the Parliaments,

I am a Faculty member of the University of New South Wales. I have experiences in four academic systems, but I have found the Australia research environment vibrant and inspiring. The level of collaboration among researchers and the possibilities for a researcher are simply great. This is how Australian Universities have moved towards the first positions in the international academic rankings in the last few years and now the research is the top in fields like applied mathematics, environmental sciences, astrophysics, medicine, oceanography and this is able to attract research and students from all around the world.

The University sector have a huge impact on Australian economy and it has been hugely affected by the current situation associated with the spread of the COVID-19. During the last years, Australian universities have relied more and more on international students, this was partially due on a underfunding of the sector. Now that international students are less likely to enrol in our universities not only for few months, but maybe years, the challenges our universities are facing are huge.

However, the response of the Australian government to this emergency are still limited. The financial aid does not even cover the losses of a single university and our more vulnerable workers are not covered by the JobSeeker plan.

The effect of this crisis on the University sector can be immense. However, Universities can not be considered as other businesses; the research developed in our campuses will have an impact on our future lives: if we think about our researchers who are currently working on finding a cure or a vaccine for the COVID-19, on rethinking the public transport, on developing cyber-security tools to protect the citizens from privacy issues when using the tracking apps, on developing social security programmes to help the economy to start again, etc., we can understand the importance of our researchers in our everyday lives. And we do not have to forget that those researchers are teaching future researchers, future employees and future leaders their courses and supervising them in their project. Without a strong support, Australian universities will lose their positions in the world and all the efforts done so far will be wasted.

I think the government has to do more for the University sector. Australia deserves it.