



## ADDENDUM

### SENATE REFERENCES COMMITTEE SUBMISSION

by

#### Australia Needs a Brighter Future

*Australia Needs a Brighter Future* is an alliance of students and their representative organisations working with the broader community to oppose the privatisation and de-funding of higher education. Cost shifting onto students means cost-shifting onto the community – our doctors, veterinarians and other professionals will have to pass the costs of their student debts onto all of us. These costs could become unsustainable.

Now, more than ever, Australia needs to reinvest in our public institutions of higher learning and research, our universities and our TAFEs. We need to invest in support for our students during their time of study.

1. We believe all Australians, regardless of race, social status, gender, sexuality, ability, location or age deserve the chance to better themselves through education at any point in their lives. As a nation we have striven for centuries to become more egalitarian through empowering our citizens through public education. This is also an aspiration of international charters and agreements Australia is a signatory too. As such, universities should be open to all Australians. From the high-school leavers just embarking on their adult lives to the 50 and 60 year olds who have lost their jobs due to economic negligence, many without significant superannuation and who are now being told they need to work for decades longer than they planned. We maintain that it is not just the right of all Australians to a lifelong publicly funded education for a public benefit; but also a vital necessity for the social and economic wellbeing of our society. This is an investment in Australia's most important resource, our people.
2. We call for:
  - more public investment in university education, not less.
  - more public investment in research, not less.
  - more public support and investment in training, retraining and vocational programs for all Australians, not less.This should be delivered through progressive reform of taxation and revenue, not through removing funding from other crucial social services.
3. We recommend the government establish a dedicated independent body with the mandate to compel the government to observe its decisions. This body would have a role in the governance and regulation of the university sector and make recommendations to government; with staff, student and community representative consultation, including, for example, overseeing course costs and university transparency. In the sector, there are already many cases of cross-subsidies, such as research often being paid for from existing

student fees, especially those charged to international students. We believe the existing regulation of the higher education sector is intended to ensure all Australians get a fair go, and that this should be strengthened, not diluted. Universities should be independent and have the autonomy to fearlessly educate, research and advocate. Funding to do so should never be used as blackmail against them nor to threaten their ability to do these things.

4. We recommend implementing the funding reforms proposed in the 2008 Bradley Review of Higher Education. This should include a nationally coordinated strategy to ensure higher education participation and success for a greater proportion of low SES, indigenous and regional students.

No matter who is in government, no matter the economic circumstances, we stand for the right of all Australians to an accessible, equitable public education system. Australia's universities are community assets made up of their staff, students and researchers all working to meet the hopes and dreams, needs and aspirations of all Australian society. They are of inestimable public value, and as such should be publicly funded to continue to deliver in the public interest.

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