



The Hon Dan Tehan MP
Minister for Education

Parliament House
CANBERRA ACT 2600

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Our Ref: MC20-026733

4 DEC 2020

Ms Tricia Blombery
President
Graduate Women-NSW Inc
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Dear Ms Blombery

Tricia,

Thank you for your letter of 7 November 2020 regarding the Job-ready Graduates package (the package) of reforms to higher education. I appreciate the time you have taken to bring these matters to my attention.

The package is focused on Australian students. It will ensure that more Australians get the opportunity to study for a university degree, make it cheaper to study in areas of expected job growth, and provide more support to regional students and universities. From next year:

- there will be more university places for Australian students, growing to 100,000 additional places in 10 years.
- regional students and regional universities will benefit from additional support worth more than \$400 million, including access to a \$5,000 Tertiary Access Payment to help with relocation costs.
- students will pay less to study in areas of expected future job demand, with discounted fees for teaching, nursing, clinical psychology, English, languages, agriculture, mathematics, science, health, architecture, environmental science, information technology and engineering.
- a \$900 million National Priorities and Industry Linkage Fund will support universities to work with local industry to produce Job-ready Graduates.

This package focuses on the skills of tomorrow, including the fields of science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM). I note your point that STEM training on its own will not be sufficient for the workplace of the future, however, the package will encourage subject diversity. Funding arrangements apply at the unit level, not the degree level.

Therefore, students studying society and culture courses can reduce the cost of their degree by choosing electives in fields such as STEM, and enhancing the skills they bring to the job market.

In relation to your concerns about differential pricing of courses, the package aligns the total combined public and private funding for higher education units with contemporary data on the cost of delivering university education. The new higher education funding model is based on university self-reported data on the actual cost of delivery of teaching in universities, including an allowance for depreciation or annual capital costs.

The package ensures all Australians will continue to have access to world-class and affordable higher education, while higher education graduates will have the job-ready skills and experience they need in a challenging labour market. Our higher education sector must respond and play a critical role in supporting Australia's economic recovery.

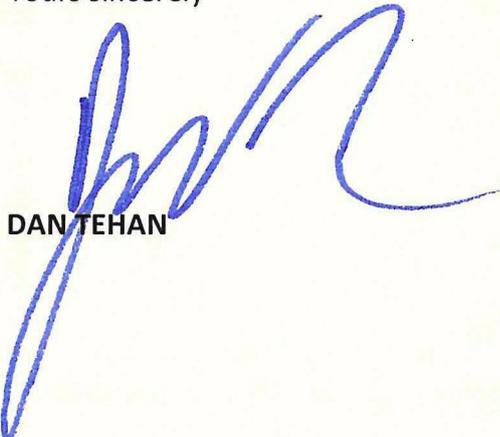
The package also complements the JobTrainer package, giving balanced tertiary education options to school leavers and displaced workers to study, upskill or reskill.

Around 60 per cent of students will see no change or a reduction in their contributions. This reduction is due to the fact that the cost of university degrees in areas of national priorities will be significantly reduced. If new or continuing students enrol in units that see their student contribution lowered (areas of national priority) in 2021, they will pay the lower contributions.

Women with a STEM, teaching or nursing degree on average, earn around 25 per cent more across their lifetime than a woman with a humanities degree and over 45 per cent more than a woman with a Year 12 qualification. According to the most recent data available, 72 per cent of students enrolled in the student contribution band with the lowest rate (Band 1 \$3,950)—the band corresponding to the greatest reduction in fees under this package—are women. This demonstrates that women stand to benefit greatly from the changes.

Thank you again for bringing your concerns to my attention.

Yours sincerely



DAN TEHAN