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<https://www.dese.gov.au/job-ready/job-ready-graduates-package-draft-legislation-consultation>

Job-ready Graduates Package draft legislation consultation

The Australian Association of University Professors (AAUP, www.professoriate.org) submits the attached 6 pages for publication:

De-funding the Universities: Dismantling Menzies' Legacy

"Many tyrannical regimes have fostered science, but no tyrannical regimes have fostered those faculties of universities that deal with human affairs, sociology, and those fields of thought where criticism of tyranny is likely to emerge." [1] These were the words of the Liberal prime minister, Sir Robert G. Menzies, in 1958, spoken in a time of international crisis, to the citizens of a smaller, poorer and more anxious Australia. But Menzies understood that the hope and strength of Australia were in a highly educated, creative, critical citizenry; that education should not be directed at creating the working force for the needs of the present, soon to become past, but at fostering the talent and curiosity of young people to create the possibilities of the future. He understood that democracy and prosperity stem from the same source – freedom of thought – and it thus behoves a government to support all students – between 1958 and 1960 his government increased university funding by 300%(!) – and to trust them to make their intellectual decisions.

The new fee structure presented by the current Liberal government operates in the opposite way to Menzies' great legacy. It sheds responsibility and tries to enforce decisions. It reduces university funding – importantly, to the sciences even more than to the humanities – and attempts to manipulate students into disciplines that politicians think are good for them and universities into internally subsidizing these skewed decisions.

We are already familiar with some of the dangers of this approach. A decade and more of continuous cuts to government funding forced universities to subsidize their research through students' fees and their teaching by 'selling' education to foreign students. This overloaded them with expenses of administration and real estate, turned their energy towards marketing and replaced the responsibility towards the students with mercantile indifference. Commodifying the education of our young citizens subjected this fundamental governmental responsibility to the vicissitudes of an open market, and the pandemic only hastened a crisis that was in the making.

Furthermore, this policy ignores the government's own data on graduate employment outcomes which indicate that Arts degrees have equivalent employment outcomes to STEM degrees, if not better in some instances, and as do the creative industries. Finally, this policy has severe consequences for female academics and students and their employment futures who are concentrated in the humanities and social sciences.

The Australian Association of University Professors calls upon the government to reassert its commitment to first class education and world leading research by expanding funding to all disciplines.

Importantly, the proliferated and profligate management of a university is not The University. The students and their teachers, the Professoriate in particular, is The University, and it is the skilled latter workforce that any government needs to re-empower and bring back to the table.

Again in the spirit of Menzies' words:

"Let us have more scientists, and more humanists. Let the scientists be touched and informed by the humanities. Let the humanists be touched and informed by science, so that they may not be lost in abstractions derived from out-dated knowledge of circumstances."^[2]

^[1]Prime Minister R. G. Menzies, "Modern Civilization and Science," (Sir Henry Simpson Newland Oration, Australasian Medical Congress, Hobart, 5 March 1958). Quoted from Travis Hallen, "Responding to a Sputnik Moment." *The Strategy Bridge*, October 4, 2016.

^[2]Ibid.

Australian Association of University Professors (AAUP,
www.professoriate.org), 17 August 2020

The attached cartoon summarizes the problem.

It is entitled "**What will university be for 14-year-olds like me?**"

Importantly, it is the work of a 14-year-old student, a member of the generation that has to be most concerned about the future of our universities. See 4 images below:







