

The Hon. Mr Dan Tehan
Federal Minister for Education
Parliament House
CANBERRA

14 August 2020

Dear Minister Tehan

I am writing to you as President of the Art Association of Australia and New Zealand (AAANZ), a national membership association and peak advocacy body, representing art historians, academics, curators and artists from around the country. I am writing on behalf of our members to voice our strong opposition to the draft legislation for the Job-ready Graduates Package.

Firstly the basic premise of the package – that Humanities degrees will be less ‘job relevant’ in the future - is incorrect. Job-ready graduates of the future will need backgrounds in the Humanities, and the arts in particular. Indeed the arts are increasingly recognised as integral to STEM subjects (science, technology, engineering and mathematics) and are being integrated into what has become known as STEAM education. STEAM is a global movement that acknowledges that to adequately prepare the workforce of the twenty-first century, societies need to provide education that will produce innovative and agile thinkers. Gonski 2.0 and the ACARA National Curriculum both highlight the importance of science and the arts working together in the Australian workplace of the future. CEOs and Corporate Directors of companies such as Barclay’s Bank, Microsoft and Xeros all comment on the importance of arts education in helping students develop workplace skills. Indeed Steve Jobs, CEO of Apple, explained ‘technology alone is not enough...it’s technology married with the humanities that yields us the results.’¹ Combining arts and science recognises that it is interdisciplinary innovators who will make the discoveries that will solve the problems of the future which is key to producing successful economies. The current proposal creates unfair divisions between disciplines by increasing fees for Humanities degrees by 113%. It would be far more prudent to encourage young Australians to have a cross-disciplinary grounding and ensure Humanities degrees remain financially accessible.

Disincentivising Humanities students on the grounds that jobs in the arts are less relevant to the economy completely ignores the thriving creative industries which, pre-Covid, injects over \$111.7 billion to the national economy annually.² This sector generates \$3.2 billion in exports and employs over 600,000 people with a further 263,563 workers embedded in non-creative industries, proving a clear industry demand for cross-disciplinary skills.³ Between the 2011 and 2016 census creative employment *grew* in Australia at an average rate of 2.2% which was nearly twice the rate of growth within the wider Australian workforce. The Australian Government’s own Bureau of Communication and Arts Research recently noted that ‘creative skills are likely to be vital for future employment as many of the industries projected for fastest growth over the next five years rely on workers with creative qualifications.’⁴ The Australian Government’s own Skills for the Future website lists creativity, originality and initiative together with analytical thinking and innovation at the top of a list of competencies most frequently identified by Australian companies as the skills that will be in demand in the future. These are the skills the Humanities subjects excel in developing. It therefore makes no sense to ‘send a price signal’ that discourages students from undertaking Humanities degrees on the false assumption that these degrees are not expected to prepare students for employment growth areas. Furthermore, with the forecast obsolescence of many jobs through the exponential growth of artificial intelligence, it is the skills taught in

Humanities subjects, particularly the Arts, that will prove to be the most resistant to automation in the future.

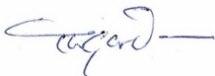
The public gallery sector, where many Art History and Visual Arts graduates find employment, currently makes substantial contributions to cultural tourism. Last year public galleries in Australia were visited by more than 16.5 million people with 44% of all visitors attending regional galleries. This is vital to the economic prosperity of many regional Australian towns.⁵ For instance one exhibition alone held at a regional gallery in Victoria attracted over 140,000 visitors over a four month period and injected \$13.2 million into the local economy.⁶ Galleries and museums make substantial contributions to the economic revitalisation of cities and regional hubs. This has been witnessed in the prosperity of Hobart, following the opening of the Museum of Old and New Art with flow on benefits to local traders and sparking a buoyant property market.

Furthermore, it has long been recognised that the arts have a 'vital role to play in building resilient communities with direct links to health and wellbeing.'⁷ Many galleries have active education and public programs that are culturally inclusive and target visitors ranging from mums with babies and people with disabilities, through to the elderly with many galleries running specific programs that cater for visitors with dementia. The exhibitions and public programs are developed and implemented by people with degrees in the Humanities. Indeed human capital is core to the achievements of these institutions and the current success of public galleries and museums across Australia is directly related to the tertiary education of Directors, Curators, Artists and other gallery professionals. This education was affordable and proportionate and enabled students from a range of socio-economic backgrounds to participate thereby ensuring a wide pool of talented and capable professionals who have subsequently built the prosperity of the sector.

This package is also inherently unfair because it disproportionately disadvantages women who account for two-thirds of students enrolled in Humanities degrees. This is untenable and will contribute to more long-term financial insecurity for women and a further widening of the gender gap. The rise in fees will impact the under-privileged particularly first-in-family students, mature-age students and Indigenous students and those from migrant backgrounds. The Arts is already a significantly underpaid sector and burdening graduates with increased debt through fee hikes has the potential to create even more social disadvantage which does not support a healthy economy.

For the above reasons, I urge you to reconsider the proposed legislation to ensure that Humanities education remains accessible and equitable and does not unfairly disadvantage some cohorts of students. Abolishing the proposed fee hike for Humanities degrees will ensure the creative industries and cultural sector can continue to grow into the future and make significant contributions to the economy, health and wellbeing of Australian citizens in a post-Covid recovery.

Yours sincerely



Dr Wendy Garden
PRESIDENT, ART ASSOCIATION OF AUSTRALIA & NEW ZEALAND

¹ Steve Jobs quoted in Walter Isaacson, *Steve Jobs*. Abacus: London, 2015, p. 485.

² Australian Government, Department of Communications and the Arts, Bureau of Communications and Arts Research (BCAR), "Cultural and creative activity in Australia 2008-09 to 2016-17." Working Paper, 2018, p. 1.

³ Ibid., p. 14. Refer also Creative Industries Innovation Centre, "Valuing Australia's creative industries" Final Report, 2013.

⁴ A New Approach, "Transformative: impacts of culture and creativity", Report Two, November 2019, p. 31. Refer also BCAR, p. 1.

⁵ Museums & Galleries Queensland and Public Gallery Association of Victoria, "Australian public galleries snapshot", 2020, p. 5.

⁶ Mark Kearney, "Marilyn Monroe exhibition a \$13 million economic windfall for Bendigo." *Bendigo Courier*, 20 October 2016.

⁷ VicHealth, "Audience access standards", 2006, p. 4.