The University of Queensland Social Work Society acting as representatives for our student membership base and future and past alumni of the BSWH and MSW submit the following relating to the discussion paper Job-Ready Graduates Higher Education Reform Package 2020 to amend higher education fees. The move to increase fees for future Social Work bachelors is a clear affront to our future profession and short sighted in the way it will affect the community at large. Further to this social works current placement within Cluster 1 of Commonwealth Contributions does not accurately represent our role as Allied Health Professionals. We recommend that social work be included in the proposed Commonwealth Contribution Cluster 2 ($13,500), and the proposed Student Contribution Band 2($7,700).

Social Works purpose is often something people struggle to understand and explain to those outside the profession. To understand the necessity of the degree’s accessibility and future we have included the definition as found within the AASW Code of Ethics.

*The social work profession promotes social change, problem solving in human relationships and the empowerment and liberation of people to enhance wellbeing. Utilising theories of human behaviour and social systems, social work intervenes at the points where people interact with their environments. Principles of human rights and social justice are fundamental to social work. (2010)*

Put simply, social workers assist in crises and in situations where individuals are struggling within their greater environment. This could be after major traumatic events such as bushfires and floods, to hospital bed sides when elderly have to face the decision of entering the aged care system and the complicated process this involves. Social workers help people navigate grief, trauma, and loss through support, counselling, assistance with accessing services, and helping to empower individuals to act with agency to make a change within their lives.

Social work is acknowledged as a valued allied health profession by the Commonwealth

Government (see the 2020 title Report for the Minister for Regional Health, Regional

Communications and Local Government on the Improvement of Access, Quality and

Distribution of Allied Health Services in Regional, Rural and Remote Australia) which

was released the same week as the Job Ready Graduates Higher Education Reform Package. However, social work funding within the discussion paper Job-Ready Graduates Higher Education Reform Package 2020 does not acknowledged this role or the importance of the 1000 hours of placement that take place within Allied Health settings such as Hospitals, and Clinics, Counseling Services, Shelters, and Drop in Centres.

The Australian Government’s [JobOutlook](https://joboutlook.gov.au/Occupation?code=2725) page outlines that social worker profession job prospects have grown and are expected to continue to increase over the next 5 years. Not only that but current unemployment is below average when compared to other degrees on university leaving. Further to this the completion of an accredited degree is the only way in which someone can become a social worker. This is not a career that can be learnt on the job but instead take 4 years of tertiary education. To increase the yearly cost by over 100% will not only limit the number of future graduates in a field it will damage Australia’s ability to recover from the current recession without new graduates to fill urgent and much needed support roles.

In conclusion to our submission relating to Job-Ready Graduates Higher Education Reform Package 2020, social work needs to be classified as an Allied Health profession. We urge you to work as an advocate for social workers to be recognized as Allied Health Professionals, as social workers advocate for those who need it most.

UQ Social Work Society