

To whom it may concern,

We propose the following changes to the Australian higher education sector.

- 1. Increase Humanities, Arts and Social Sciences (HASS) funding.** The HASS disciplines are major contributors to the Australian economy, education sector, research and society. While HASS received 16% of the nation's research income in 2012, the field produced 34% of the research outputs in the university sector. HASS contributed 44.2% of the total number of Units of Evaluation in the 2012 ERA (Excellence in Research for Australia) research assessment exercise, producing world-class research. The HASS share of the total government expenditure on R&D in 2008–09 was 4.92%, and in 2011–12, it was 6.51%; the STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering, Mathematics) share was 95.08% and 93.49% respectively. In higher education, the STEM fields received 71.50% of total expenditure, with HASS at 28.50%. Given that a 1% increase in higher education R&D leads to \$24b over 10 years (Deloitte Access Economics 2020), HASS at large and anthropology in particular, present an opportune prospect for an overdue, considerable, increase in funding.
- 2. Funding HASS is in the interest of National Security.** The ASIO Director-General, Mike Burgess stated in every annual threat assessment that ASIO has seen an increase in the threat from right-wing extremists. ASIO Director-General's threat assessments of 2021 and 2022, particularly the comments relating to the young age of Australians being radicalised, the use of online technologies, and the rise that ASIO has seen in extremist movements in Australia. HASS fields can contribute to the efforts to combat the escalating threat of ideologically motivated violent extremism, which now constitutes 40% of ASIO's cases (Grant 2022). United Nation's Secretary General's Plan of Action to Prevent Violent Extremism (A/70/674) recommends implementing education programmes that promote "global citizenship", soft skills, critical thinking and digital literacy – which fall under HASS umbrella (UNESCO 2017). An anthropologist Scott Atran (2011), who was hired by UN Security Council to report on radicalisation, found that people who become terrorists learn to live in a parallel universe, bound by the cause, which they mistake for the world. Anthropology

removes siloes and opens cultural worlds, making life safe for human difference.

- 3. Invest in Anthropology.** Anthropology looks deeply into social phenomena as they are lived and as they unfold. Social science disciplines with their cultivation of critical thinking, cross-cultural understanding and illuminating familiar problems in a new light are crucial to developing dynamic responses to emerging world issues, such as COVID-19. As a core social science discipline, anthropology is able to produce a holistic set of interdisciplinary knowledge and in-depth analysis of culture and people that is often missing in STEM-dominated teams, offering effective solutions to complex national and global problems. Health is grounded in culture and without understanding culture, the prospect of providing effective health outcomes is diminished. Having vaccines and masks is not enough, we need to understand how such solutions integrate with people's cultures and beliefs. Policy-makers need to understand how structural factors contribute to problems that plague Australia's metropole and regions, from the rise of right-wing extremism, to suicides, to the epidemic of loneliness. Statistics is not enough, decision-makers need to understand the meaning behind statistics, which anthropology is equipped to provide through its method of participant observation and robust theories that help to make meaning of complexity.

The Excellence in Research for Australia found that the disciplinary outputs for Anthropology grew by 31% outperforming 12% national average (Turner and Brass 2014). Given that for every \$1 invested in higher education research and development is linked to a \$5 return to GDP (Universities Australia), investing in high performing discipline of anthropology that contributes to in-depth contextual understanding and response to complex problems is a worthwhile endeavour.

- 4. Publicise Anthropology.** Anthropological research produces insights that transform worlds to be safer for human differences. Considering the rise of right-wing extremism across the globe and within Australia, promotions of anthropological knowledges into the daily lives of Australians through media and education curriculum is a matter of national security. Anthropological insights are also significant in developing public literacy on various challenges of living in the Anthropocene. For example, STEM has given the figures and data into the phenomenon of climate change, but STEM lacks theory and method that allows creating a

coherent, culturally grounded response to the findings. Similarly, STEM lacks the capacity to analyse and respond to broader social, structural and cultural forces that may stand in the way of addressing complex problems, such as climate change. We recommend to fund programs that help to disseminate anthropological insights to the public.

5. **Make secure permanent employment the industry norm.** From 2002 to 2012 the number of casually employed FTE (Full-Time Equivalent) staff grew by 43.18%, while full-time and fractional full-time grew by 13.42 and 35.18% respectively. Aging senior staff and the absence of permanent positions on the faculty create risks for succession planning and may impact the future of Australian universities to safeguard and grow the wealth of HASS expertise. This is crucial given that approximately 60% of Australians aged 20-69 of the aged 20–69 with a Bachelor degree are HASS-trained. With following generations of Australians expected to engage in multiple career paths over their working lives, HASS in general and anthropology in particular, offer a unique transferable skillset that is indispensable to the future-proofing of the Australian workforce (Turner and Brass 2014). Having permanently employed staff will safeguard the expertise which in turn will help to future-proof Australia's workforce. Receding from regions, anthropology is now offered largely through the metropolitan and G8 universities, leaving regions behind (Turner and Brass 2014). Receding and loss of the expertise is epitomised by the axing of Anthropology and Sociology staff and majors at the University of Western Australia. The outcome of the cuts impacted the ability of mining companies to meet expectations of dealing with Indigenous groups, whilst depriving Western Australia of anthropology graduates who possess, in the words of former federal education minister Dan Tehan, the 'skills that will be in demand in areas of future jobs growth' (Carr 2021). HASS expertise at large and anthropology expertise in particular must be safeguarded from such losses taking place in the future – losses that Australia can't afford in a globally competitive economy.

6. **Reintroduce tenure.** Tenure is a safeguard of academic freedom and is essential for the maintenance of intellectual liberty and high standards in education and in scholarship, which, leaves academics open to the risk of losing their livelihoods if the knowledge they share is questioning hegemonic views that benefit power structures. Such a situation is of course

against the value of the academic pursuit of truth and excellence (Rao and Bostock 1988).

7. **Make higher education free.** Many Australians holding officers of power now have benefited from free education. Why not return it for the new generation of Australians to benefit? After all, for every 50,000 extra graduates, an additional \$1.8 billion of economic activity is generated annually (Universities Australia). Every graduate entering the workforce increases Australian GDP by \$124450. For every 1000 new graduates entering the workforce, 120 new jobs are created for people without a degree. The wages of people without a degree are boosted by \$655 a year when more graduates join the national workforce (Cadence Economics 2016). Indeed, if Germany, whose population is triple that of Australia, offers tuition-free higher education, why not Australia? Germany boasts the second-highest employment rate of recent graduates in Europe, standing at 91.3% (Trading Economics 2022). Why not Australia?

Signed,

Australian Network of Student Anthropologists
The University of Queensland Anthropology Society
The University of Queensland History Society
The University of Queensland English & English Literature

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