Dear Panel Members of the Australian Universities Accord, Thank you for making the time to review the tertiary education system in Australia, and inviting submissions from stakeholders such as myself. I am an early-career researcher, and have just commenced a doctorate in climate science at the University of New South Wales. My research is about the patterns of large-scale weather systems that bring rain across South-Eastern Australia. I finished high-school in Wagga Wagga during the worst years of the Millennium drought in 2007, and this motivated me to use my interest in maths and science to improve the prediction of rainfall. I would like to contribute to the discussion on the area of investment and affordability of higher-degree research courses. I am aware that many of my fellow PhD students are feeling a high level of financial stress, due to the low level of the Research Training Program (RTP) stipend along with the rising cost of living. In a recent survey of climate research students across the Centre of Excellence for Climate Extremes, it was reported that many students are compromising health-care, or working extra hours in part-time employment to meet their short-term financial needs. In my own situation, I have found it desperately difficult to obtain affordable accommodation close to the campus where I study (UNSW Kensington). Even the recently announced increase of RTP stipends to $35 000 per year for 2023 does not open up many affordable accommodation options for me, and leave enough money left over for food, bills, and un-expected expenses. Indeed, I am still yet to find a viable accommodation option. Meanwhile, progress on my research project has ground to a halt. I believe the rate of RTP scholarship being barely more than the minimum wage, along with the rising cost of living, makes it rather unattractive for high-school students and undergraduates to pursue a career researching vital areas of science and technology that build Australia as a nation. Students could use their skills in maths and computer programming in employment with private companies instead, and earn a lot more money. I would like to recommend that the rate of RTP stipend be revisited and increased, and in particular for the RTP stipend to consider the cost of living in the location where the research is being undertaken. Thank you again for reading my submission and including it in your review. Yours sincerely, Nicholas Grosfeld. UNSW PhD candidate and Researcher https://www.unsw.edu.au/research/ccrc/about-us/our-people/students