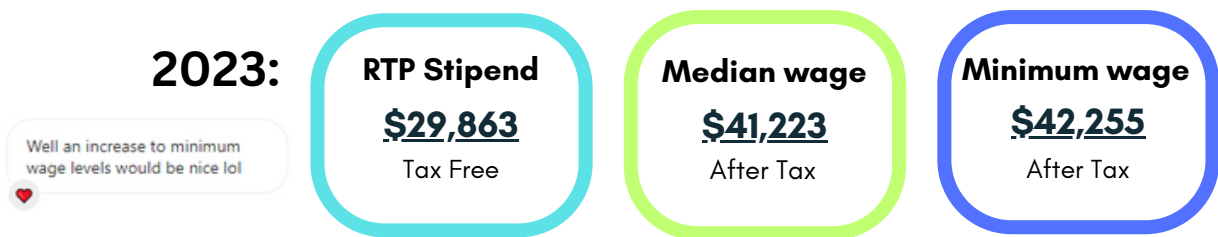


Briefing Note: PhD Student Liveable Wage

Australian PhD students are world-leading researchers creating top-tier solutions for the problems of today and for tomorrow. Graduate students account for 56% of Australian university human resources in research & development: a crucial factor in rankings, funding and collaboration. They are the innovators of the university; at the forefront of economic, educational and social development.

1 in 2 PhD students experience psychological distress
1 in 3 is at risk for a common psychiatric disorder

They are also **exploited and at risk.**



The RTP is intended to cover a full-time equivalent of 38 hours/ week with allowance for a maximum of 6 hours external income per week. Most PhD students work more hours on their research alone. If they do choose to work, most find employment in low-skilled, labour-intensive jobs because few employers will approve such restricted work hours.





The 'ideal' position is teaching within your institution. In reality, these vacancies do not exist. Australia awards over 10,000 PhDs each year into an academic job market that employs only 164,000 people nationwide and has experienced severe revenue losses and redundancies since 2020, only compounding the existing oversaturation of the casual academic market.

Cotutelle students enrolled in double doctorates with international universities face additional self-funded expenses: visas, travel, accommodation, relocation costs; sometimes forcibly maintaining two households across two continents. Per diems and top ups are difficult to find and obtain.

The RTP also restricts the funded duration of candidature to 3.5 years and requires full-time enrolment. This negates the impact of pandemics, illness, care responsibilities, disability, travel; among others. The administrative burden in navigating these issues can cause also cause severe stress and discourage students from accessing potential relief and support.

The system functions to exacerbate inequities.


Australia's identified equity groups are all proportionally underrepresented in PhD enrolments.

	PhD	Pop.
	1%	3%
	5.5%	18%
	13.5%	27%
	9%	25%

These categories were defined in 1989 and do not reflect the complex, heterogenous nature of contemporary university students. Veterans, care leavers, refugees and first-in-family students all face historic disadvantage when pursuing PhDs.

Equity groups also face increased financial pressure from co-morbidities and support systems that are often living in precarity themselves.

It will mostly revolve around "this week I had to borrow money from my dad to afford my medication, because I don't have any money"

 Women comprise 60% PhD enrolments but are disproportionately disadvantaged by inadequate parental leave policies and not receiving superannuation contributions for the duration of the degree.

- Recommendation:**
1. **salaries not scholarships**
 2. **employed not exploited**
 3. **valued not vulnerable**