

## **DASSH response to the Call for Comment on the proposed Higher Education Support Amendment (VET FEE-HELP Reform) Bill 2015**

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The Australasian Council of Deans of Arts, Social Sciences and Humanities (DASSH) welcomes the opportunity to make a submission in response to the Education and Employment Legislation Committee's invitation for public comment on the proposed Higher Education Support Amendment (VET FEE-HELP Reform) Bill 2015.

DASSH represents ASSH disciplines across Australia and New Zealand, including 36 Australian universities. A number of these universities are mixed- or dual-sector institutions, providing not only undergraduate and postgraduate degrees, but also vocational education and training (VET) qualifications. DASSH shares the Minister's concern about the current state of the VET FEE-HELP system and its vulnerabilities particularly in regard to the quality of outcomes for students, and the protection of students, public monies and the reputation of the broader VET sector.

DASSH welcomes the Government's consultation with the sector throughout the current VET reform process and that a number of the issues and concerns raised by the sector were taken on board and addressed in the Amendment Bill. DASSH hopes that the openness and consultation seen to date continues through the implementation of the reforms.

In order to be competitive domestically and internationally, Australia needs to produce graduates with the skills and knowledge required for employment in their various fields. The quality of our higher education providers has a direct impact on the quality of our students. While there are many high quality service providers in Australia who already meet the quality standards, DASSH supports the provisions put in place in the Amendment Bill tightening the controls needed to achieve consistent quality outcomes. As such, DASSH supports the proposed improvements to the VET FEE-HELP system, especially the following provisions:

1. That it supports Australian higher education institutions to provide high quality educational qualifications, through appropriate accountability and governance measures.
2. That it includes equity provisions to ensure that students from low-SES, indigenous, regional groups, and under the age of 18 are not disadvantaged in their access to higher education.
3. That the Commonwealth uses its existing powers to effectively pursue the unscrupulous behaviours from VET providers (or their agent).

Professor Susan Dodds

**President**

**Australasian Council of Deans of Arts, Social Sciences and Humanities (DASSH)**

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## **About DASSH**

The Australasian Council of Deans of Arts, Social Sciences and Humanities (DASSH) is the authoritative agency on research, teaching and learning for the Arts, Social Sciences and Humanities (ASSH) in Australian and New Zealand universities.

DASSH supports those within these institutions who have responsibility for the governance and management of research and teaching and learning in their universities. DASSH also supports those who aspire to these positions through a Network of Associate Deans (Learning and Teaching) and a Network of Associate Deans (Research).