

HASS Deans fear consequences of fee hike for students

The Australasian Council of Deans of Arts, Social Sciences and Humanities (DASSH) was concerned by Federal Education Minister Dan Tehan's announcement on Friday of changes to government funding of university places for Australian students.

DASSH members view the substantial reductions in support for students undertaking degrees in humanities and social sciences, including law, economics, management and communications, as a failure to recognise the contributions of our graduates to the nation's economy, society and future. Though the increase in the total number of Commonwealth supported university places is welcome, Australia requires graduates with diverse skillsets. Furthermore, DASSH members believe students deserve the opportunity to choose courses they believe will best serve their future careers and to undertake those courses at a fair and equitable cost.

"Friday's announcement from Minister Tehan is disappointing and short-sighted," said Prof Mandy Thomas, President. "Our graduates possess some of the most adaptable skillsets of any university-educated workers and are uniquely placed to fulfil the workforce needs of the future."

"[Time](#) and [again](#), studies find that the future labour-force will be reliant on the human skills of communication, creativity and critical thinking, and this new funding model has the potential to drive students away from these fields or disadvantage students seeking those learning experiences," Prof Thomas added.

A [2018 report](#) published by DASSH found that the Humanities, Arts and Social Sciences (HASS) disciplines supply two-thirds of Australia's workforce, and that graduates of HASS degrees are highly prized and increasingly sought-after across industry groups. The report also found that HASS disciplines have been undervalued historically – Minister Tehan's actions would seem to indicate that this trend is continuing.

The reduction in support for studies in HASS disciplines is also a failure to recognise the intrinsic value of the disciplines, or of a society with an appreciation for their content and methodologies. According to [Deloitte Access Economics](#) research, those trained in HASS fields exhibit greater levels of trust, volunteerism, political engagement and tolerance than those without such education. DASSH members are troubled at the prospect of a policy environment that does not value these traits.

The enormous eruptions in countries around the globe caused by COVID-19, the Black Lives Matter movement and the impact of climate change all reveal that in this period of uncertainty, we need ways to understand the world we live in, imagine the future differently, to think creatively, and to ask questions of our world. Understanding how societies function and change and then learning how to think creatively and critically in response to those changes will not only provide new insights but will also help us to explore and understand the human experience.

For media enquiries contact:

Meghan Bergamin

Executive Officer, Australasian Council of Deans of Arts, Social Sciences and Humanities

T: 02 6162 1297 E: eo@dassh.edu.au

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 Humanities, Arts and Social Sciences (HASS) in Australian and New Zealand universities.

DASSH supports those within these institutions who have responsibility for the governance and management of research, teaching and engagement in HASS disciplines. DASSH also supports those who aspire to these positions through a Network of Associate and Deputy Deans.