

Statement: 2023-34 Federal Budget

Australasian Council of Deans of Arts, Social Sciences and Humanities

9 May 2023

Increases in payment rates for Youth Allowance, Austudy and ABSTUDY in the 2023-24 Federal Budget are welcomed by the Australasian Council of Deans of Arts, Social Sciences and Humanities (DASSH).

An additional payment \$40 per fortnight and an increase of up to \$31 per fortnight in Commonwealth Rental Assistance falls short of what is needed but will provide critical cost of living relief for university students in Australia.

The biggest barrier to improving access and equity is the price borne by students, both in the immediate costs that they must pay to study as well as by the opportunity costs of choosing to go to university.

There is strong evidence financial support increases participation and retention rates for underrepresented students, including those from a low-socio-economic-status background, Indigenous, first in family and rural and remote students.

DASSH has welcomed the Universities Accord consultation process and acknowledges that major announcements for the higher education sector will be reserved until that process is complete.

In our recent submission to the Universities Accord Advisory Panel we outlined a number of key priorities for future funding.

They include:

- Improved financial support for students and increased equity of access through a national bursary scheme.
- University fee reform – an end to the Job-Ready Graduates package and the introduction of an equitable fee structure that reflects the cost of teaching and research.
- Funding for the prioritisation of Indigenous Knowledges and the reinstatement of a high-level federal advisory body such as the Indigenous Higher Education Advisory Committee.

The arts, social sciences and humanities have the highest enrolments out of all disciplines and attract a third of all Indigenous students, double the proportion of women enrolled in STEM disciplines and more than half of all students who identify as gender diverse.

By acknowledging the critical role our disciplines will play in nation-building efforts into the future the federal government will be favouring Australia's transition to a knowledge economy while at the same time benefiting our most vulnerable students.

Professor Nick Bisley

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