

7th September 2020

Committee Secretary
Senate Education and Employment Committees
PO Box 6100
Parliament House
Canberra ACT 2600

Dear Committee Secretary

I am making this submission to ask that proposed changes to the Commonwealth subsidy for Social Work degrees as a part of the Job-Ready Graduates Higher Education Reform Package 2020 be reconsidered.

The Australian Government has recently deemed Social Workers as a “very highly skilled” occupation with an expected growth rate of 29% of the next 5 years. Additionally, Social Work graduates in 2019 had a labour force participation rate of 95.3% which indicates that Social Workers are job-ready graduates and there should be a level of encouragement for young people in Australia to study Social Work. By increasing higher education fees for Social Work degrees, young Australians will be turned away from this profession.

Social Work also plays a large part in improving the health and wellbeing outcomes for people all over Australia. Unfortunately, many Social Workers are already facing challenges associated with meeting the demands of their clients, with three in five community sector workers reporting an increase in the numbers of clients their service was unable to support during 2019.

As Australia has grappled with the crises associated with both the recent bushfires and the COVID-19 pandemic, Social Workers have played a vital role in providing much needed support, therapy, counselling and resource information to vulnerable people. In my own work, I have seen an increase in the amount of older Australians requiring emotional support, reassurance and psychotherapeutic counselling as a result of the many concerns and fears they have related to the spread of COVID-19. I am writing to you to ask that the Australian Government help preserve the future of Social Work in Australia and guarantee that funding for Social Work education remain in line with other allied health professions.

Yours sincerely,

James Magin
Social Worker
Transitional Aged Care
War Memorial Hospital