

Robyn Blake

To Minister Dan Tehan, Minister for Education,

I am writing to you today in regards to your Job Ready Graduates Policy and the potential effects it will have on the Social Work Degree. As I am writing this letter to you, I am wearing three different hats: one as a mother of a year 12 graduate who is intending on studying to be a Social Worker in the foreseeable future: one as a mature aged student, currently in my final year of my Social Work Degree: and lastly as an activist working on the Save Social Work Campaign. All of which play an important role, both collectively and individually, regarding this proposed change to the costing of the Social Work degree at all universities in Australia. I will now elaborate further on my stance from these three different perspectives.

Most parents hope that their children will find a career that they not only love, but are very passionate about. Hoping that whilst completing the schooling required for the career, they do not incur a mountain of debt to go with it. As my child is currently finishing year 12 and looking to become a Social Worker, I am very concerned about the amount of debt she will be responsible for if this policy is passed. Minister Tehan, why should my child be so badly financially punished just for following their dream?

As a university student that is currently in her final year of her Social Work Degree, and who began studying at the age of 47, I know personally that if the costing of this degree was as high as is currently proposed by the Job Graduates Policy, it would have been a significant deterrent for me in pursuing my chosen career. One that I am now thoroughly enjoying and looking forward to joining the employment market once I have graduated. As more than one third of Social Work Students are mature aged (over 35), imagine the impact on student enrolments if all mature aged people were prevented from following their chosen career by the changes proposed by this policy.

Using my activist hat, I could bombard you with all the relevant statistics associated with the prevalence of Social Workers and the essential work they do now and how needed they will be in future, but I won't. I could discuss at length the many and varied avenues a Social Worker will work their magic to help someone in need, but I won't. I could talk about the predicted increase in demand for Social Workers that has been spoken about by government officials and how imperative Social Workers were during the recent disastrous bush fires and during this pandemic, but I won't. Because I believe that you Minister Tehan and are already aware of all of this, yet for some reason, you are still steadfast in making these unwarranted changes to such a worthy degree.

Minister Tehan, is it your intention to create a country full of people that are only studying the degree that is cheapest, or would you prefer students to have a deep passion about what they are studying and, in turn, about their career? Minister Tehan, are you wanting a country full of people who are working in jobs that they are excelling at and are extremely passionate about? Or would you prefer people working in jobs they are not passionate about and are just working for works sake. I am sure you don't need me to tell you how production is directly

related to how satisfied a person is with their job. Significant productivity gains come from people working in areas that they are passionate about and workers that are really wanting to make positive changes within this great country we all live in. Myself, my child, and every other person that has a desire to become a Social Worker implore you to change your mind regarding the proposed changes to the costing of the Social Work Degree

Respectfully

Robyn Blake