



University of Newcastle - Submission to the Senate Standing Committee on Education and Employment

Inquiry into the Higher Education Support (Charges) Bill 2018 and Higher Education Support Amendment (Cost Recovery) Bill 2018

The University of Newcastle welcomes the opportunity to make a submission to the Senate Standing Committee on Education and Employment into the Higher Education Support (Charges) Bill and the Higher Education Support Amendment (Cost Recovery) Bill 2018.

Shared costs

We acknowledge the Australian Government's agenda to recover costs of administered programs, as outlined in the Cost Recovery Guidelines. However the costs of administering HELP are already shared by the university sector and government – the University of Newcastle, like other universities, provides a range of administrative and student services in order to ensure it properly administers HELP funding.

Consultation

There has been limited consultation with the sector prior to introducing this Bill to Parliament. This Bill would implement one of a range of 2018 Budget measures that would affect the higher education sector, and should be considered in context of other measures. However due to a lack of information on other Budget measures it may be difficult to properly consider the current Bill in context, or to consider the 'cumulative effect of other government activities' as identified in the Guidelines.

Policy outcomes

It is appropriate for the Committee to consider the policy outcome of cost recovery, as per the Government's Cost Recovery Guidelines. The University of Newcastle is committed to equity, and has a strong record in delivery in this area. We run the oldest and largest enabling program in Australia, with more than 85% of participants articulating to an undergraduate course. A high proportion of our students are from low SES and first-in-family backgrounds, and close to 3% of our undergraduate students identify as Indigenous. The HELP program is an essential part of ensuring people from all backgrounds and postcodes have a pathway to higher education, and as a leader in equitable access, the University is keen to ensure that additional costs do not hamper its ability to appropriately administer this service to students.

While the total amount charged per year is not considerable in the context of the University's total budget, it will necessarily be diverted from other essential activities at the University, including those that support equity outcomes.

In addition, as the amount charged is set in regulation rather than legislation, we are concerned that it could, at least theoretically, change significantly without consultation or in-depth Parliamentary consideration.

About the University of Newcastle



The University of Newcastle is a research intensive university that serves the people of its regions. In 2018 the University of Newcastle had more than 37,500 students, including nearly 21,500 domestic undergraduate students.

We are proud of our strong track record delivering on both excellence and equity.

A national leader in enabling education, we have provided more than 50,000 students with a pathway to education since we began these initiatives in 1974. About 85% of those completing our enabling programs enrol in higher education.

We are also proud of our record in Indigenous education, with more than 1,100 Indigenous students currently enrolled – nearly 3% of all students. Our medical school has long focussed on Indigenous medical training, with more than 30% of all Indigenous doctors trained by the University of Newcastle.

This is complemented by a strong record in research excellence. In the last ERA exercise, the University of Newcastle ranked in the top eight for the number of research fields rated 'above world standard', and we are the number one university in Australia for industry research income per academic.