

This is my submission to the proposed changes to the Higher Education Funding Amendment Bill 2002 tabled on the 5th June 2002 by the Minister for Education, Science and Training the Hon Dr Brendan Nelson MP. I was granted an extension to Monday 29th July.

I am writing as a concerned university student in regards to the proposed legislation to extend the Post-Graduate Education Loan Scheme to four private institutions: Bond University, Christian Heritage College, Melbourne College of Divinity, and Tabor College. I firmly believe that already scarce public, government funds should not be used to aid private universities. I am especially apprehensive due to the Christian nature of Christian Heritage College, Melbourne College of Divinity, and Tabor College. These institutions are not strictly universities. The education they provide is biased and restrictive due to the indoctrination from one particular religion. The government should not support such restricted institutions.

There are also associated problems with the accountability of private institutions receiving government support. The proposed institutions are not necessarily providing adequate research, assessment, infrastructure or teaching quality equal to public university counterparts and should therefore not receive an equal level of government support.

The introduction of the PELS would do nothing in aiding people from disadvantaged backgrounds to attend these institutions if they wished. It has been evident since the introduction of the PELS that people from lower socio-economic backgrounds, indigenous people, women and people from rural and regional areas have found post-graduate degrees less accessible. People from these backgrounds are simply not willing to create a huge debt for themselves. They fear, and statistics prove their fears correct, that they may never repay their debt. Further implementation of this scheme would see higher education become even less attainable to people from disadvantaged backgrounds.

I believe that the PELS should not be extended to Bond University, Christian Heritage College, Melbourne College of Divinity, and Tabor College.

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