Australasian Society for Continental Philosophy

9 April 2026

Submission to Higher Education Support Amendment (Reverse Job-Ready Graduates Fee Hikes and End 50k Arts Degrees) Bill 2025

Dear Committee Members,

The Executive Committee of the Australasian Society for Continental Philosophy (ASCP) welcomes the opportunity to make a submission to the Senate Education and Employment Legislation Committee's Inquiry into the Higher Education Support Amendment (Reverse Job-Ready Graduates Fee Hikes and End 50k Arts Degrees) Bill 2025.

The ASCP, established in 1995, represents researchers working with the Continental European philosophical tradition across Australia, New Zealand, the South Pacific and Southeast Asia, and in disciplines ranging across the full breadth of the Humanities and Social Sciences. Our Society promotes the interdisciplinary exchange of ideas inspired by the diverse traditions of European Philosophy, and the development of productive links with educational institutions, government bodies, and marginalized communities within the wider Australasian public. We have a longstanding commitment to advance gender equity in academia and to foster dialogue between diverse philosophical and cultural traditions, both within Australia and internationally.

Calls to reverse the Job-Ready Graduates (JRG) package have been intensifying for some time. On behalf of our diverse membership and in line with our Society's aims, the ASCP Executive Committee echoes many of the well-established concerns related to the JRG. In particular, we are concerned with how: (i) **the JRG undermines equity of participation in higher education**, of the kind the ASCP strives to promote; and (ii) **the JRG works against our national interests** by undermining the capacity for research in the Humanities and Social Sciences, including philosophical research, to address the major challenges of our time.

As the Australian Universities Accord Final Report recognizes, the JRG's "purpose of providing price signals to influence student choices has failed."[1] In the lowest student-contribution band, Bachelor commencements in Agriculture, Maths, Education and Nursing actually declined overall between 2020 and 2024.[2] Meanwhile, the JRG continues to encumber many students with extremely large debts that are not aligned with their earning potential. A three-year Arts degree now costs approximately $52,000. The burden of this very large increase in fees for those studying Humanities and Social Sciences has also disproportionately impacted women, Indigenous and first-in-family university students, as well as students from low

[1] Australian Universities Accord Final Report (2024), https://www.education.gov.au/download/17990/australian-universities-accord-final-reportdocument/36760/australian-universities-accord-final-report/pdf

[2] Innovative Research Universities, Impacts of the Job-Ready Graduates policy and options for reform (March 2026), https://iru.edu.au/wp-content/uploads/2026/03/Impacts-of-the-Job-Ready-Graduates-policy-and-options-for-reform-IRU-analysis.pdf

socioeconomic backgrounds, who are more likely to commence higher education in disciplines focused on society and culture. The JRG clearly undermines the ASCP's and the Universities Accord's goal related to equity of participation in higher education.[3]

The JRG also works against our national interests. As analysis by the Innovative Research Universities shows, Bachelor commencements in the Humanities and Social Sciences declined significantly between 2020 and 2024.[4] In turn, this has increased the financial strain felt by Arts Faculties across Australia, resulting in course cutting and job losses at the University of Wollongong, Macquarie University and the University of Tasmania, among others. At a time of major political, technological, economic and ecological upheaval, the loss of large numbers of teachers and researchers in the Humanities and Social Sciences reduces our national capacity to tackle the major cultural and social challenges of our time. Declining enrolments and the ensuing loss of courses and even whole disciplines also greatly restrict the benefits that flow from the existence of a high degree of cultural and social literacy in our community. Australia needs a widespread capacity to interrogate and engage in thoughtful debate around the ideas, beliefs and values that structure and guide our individual and collective lives. Moreover, as the Australian Academy of the Humanities has noted, Humanities and Social Sciences research is essential for the development of the "cultural and social expertise" Australia needs "to design, deploy, evaluate and govern AI in ways that are trustworthy, inclusive and aligned with Australian values and contexts."[5] In short, the critical, analytical and creative competencies developed and exercised through study and research in the Humanities and Social Sciences are a crucial public good that ought to be safeguarded and appropriately funded.

In light of the above, the ASCP Executive Committee wholeheartedly supports, and as a matter of extreme urgency, the Universities Accord's Recommendation 16(a), which involves "reducing student contributions to address the most significant impacts of the Job-ready Graduates (JRG) package starting with students in humanities, other society and culture, communications and human movement."

Sincerely,

A/Prof. Charles Barbour, Chair of the ASCP
On behalf of the ASCP executive.

---

[3] Australian Universities Accord Final Report (2024), https://www.education.gov.au/download/17990/australian-universities-accord-final-reportdocument/36760/australian-universities-accord-final-report/pdf

[4] Innovative Research Universities, Impacts of the Job-Ready Graduates policy and options for reform (March 2026), https://iru.edu.au/wp-content/uploads/2026/03/Impacts-of-the-Job-Ready-Graduates-policy-and-options-for-reform-IRU-analysis.pdf

[5] Australian Academy of the Humanities, Pre-Budget Submission: Backing Australian Thinking (January 2026), http://humanities.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2026/02/AAH-Pre-budget-submission-february-2026.pdf