

MEDIA RELEASE: NATIONAL ALLIANCE FOR PUBLIC UNIVERSITIES CONDEMNS EDUCATION MINISTER DAN TEHAN'S PROPOSED CHANGES TO HIGHER EDUCATION

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The National Alliance for Public Universities unequivocally condemns the plan to vastly increase the cost of popular university degrees in the creative arts, humanities, economics and behavioural sciences.

Faculties of Arts and Social Sciences are often among the biggest in universities. These fee changes are a body-blow not just to the humanities, but to higher education in general. First, the government refused to give universities any help during Covid-19. Now, it is determined to cut their legs out from under them. Hundreds of thousands of students choose to study subjects like Philosophy, History, Law, Communications or Economics. Many employers value these choices. At many universities, subjects like medicine are subsidised by income from subjects like these. Tehan's scheme will weaken society, massively drain skills from the economy, and further undermine this country's third-largest export market.

There is literally no sector of our society or our economy where graduates from these domains are not present and highly valued. Humanities subjects, for instance, are widely taught and prized at school as essential to the personal, intellectual and social development of young people. Studying society and culture critically is not an optional extra in a civilised society. Intelligent nations reflect on themselves and value the disciplines which promote study of our world.

It is hard to see how this decision is not ideological. Not so long ago, the government promoted the Ramsay Centre for Western Civilisation on the grounds that humanities education mattered. But now, after most universities rejected Ramsay, it is proposing to penalize students for studying those very subjects.

Higher education is serious and should not be a battle-ground for puerile culture wars. It is not the role of government to make students' choices for them about what they want to learn. The humanities and other fields being penalized must be for everyone, not just for the rich. This decision is a massive blow to educational diversity and equity in our society and must be reversed immediately.