

The Royal Historical Society of Victoria, the peak body for local and community history in Victoria for over a century, is astonished that Humanities students in Australian universities are being burdened with an unprecedented rise of up to 113% in student fees. This is an impost on one of Australia's most creative sectors at a time when creative solutions are needed to help Australia emerge from an economic shock of unparalleled dimensions. Encouragement of expanded enrolments in the sciences must not be at the expense of history, the humanities and social sciences generally. The RHSV is also flabbergasted that the discipline of History is to suffer one of the biggest rises in fees.

The practice of History helps us to understand who we are as Australians and what experiences have shaped our identity. It is an essential part of civics education to give young people a sense of purpose by locating them in the past and the contemporary world as well as informing policies for the future. It serves the same functions for local communities. At moments of health crisis such as the COVID 19 pandemic, historians can remind us that we have suffered such a scourge before and offer hope and solutions for a recovery. And in moments of social crisis, such as the global Black Lives Matter protests, History can help Australians understand and face their colonial past to forge reconciling programs aimed at fostering greater unity within Australian Society.

History training also provides young people with vital workplace skills: analysing of evidence, problem solving and communication skills, vital for productive jobs. Thousands of secondary teachers, public servants, business leaders, those in the legal profession and in the Arts generally have studied History and the Humanities. History is written, published, sold and read right across the country keeping people not only in work but raising their ability to contribute in a responsible and informed way to national wellbeing. The annual Victorian Community History Awards in full swing at the moment, produces 150 books and other history products each year, which add to our economic output and enhance community wellbeing.

Any impediments to history in the academy also diminishes community history. As the peak body of community History in Victoria, the RHSV most strongly protests at the misguided government policy announced by Minister Dan Tehan today and calls on him to reduce the penalty on doing the Humanities in Australian Universities.

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