



Dr Monique Ryan Welcomes Establishment of Australian Tertiary Education Commission, Urges Immediate Action on Job Ready Graduates Scheme, Prac Placements and HECS Indexation

Independent MP for Kooyong, Dr Monique Ryan today welcomed the Government's establishment of the interim Australian Tertiary Education Commission (ATEC), which is set to be fully operational by 2026. The Commission will play a central role in reforming Australia's tertiary education system to better meet our skills needs.

Dr Ryan praised the Government's commitment to structural reform of the tertiary education sector, including expansion of fee-free university preparation programs, increased repayment thresholds for student loans, and improvements to how indexation is applied to HECS-HELP debts.

However, Dr Ryan called on the Government to immediately reverse the Job Ready Graduates (JRG) scheme, which continues to unfairly penalise students in disciplines such as history, philosophy, media, and culture. Under the scheme, these students pay up to twice as much for their degrees compared to those in science, IT, engineering, and health.

"The Job Ready Graduates scheme is a failed, punitive policy that has priced students out of the degrees we need to meet future challenges," Dr Ryan said. "It's been four years since this scheme was introduced by the Morrison government. Too many students have been saddled with too much debt in that time. Despite the Albanese governments acknowledgements of its flaws, we're still waiting for action."

The 2023 Universities Accord Final Report recommended "urgent remediation" of the JRG scheme, noting it had "significantly and unfairly increased what students repay." Both former Shadow Education Minister Tanya Plibersek, and current Education Minister Jason Clare, have criticised the scheme, yet it remains in place.

Dr Ryan warned that any fee reforms via ATEC won't take effect until 2027 at the earliest, meaning that students will continue to accrue disproportionate debts for at least two more years.

The Government has indicated that the first legislation in the new Parliament will reduce existing HECS-HELP debts by 20%, a move Dr Ryan supports. However, she stressed that this must be accompanied by broader reform.

"I urge the Minister to reverse the Job Ready Graduates scheme in the first week of the new Parliament. At the same time, we should extend prac placement support to all students in the care sector, and change the timing of indexation so it reflects the timing of repayments. We have to address the residual inequities in our tertiary education system now—not in two years' time. Our students and graduates deserve nothing less."

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