



FEDERATION of  
**AUSTRALIAN  
HISTORICAL SOCIETIES**

GPO Box 1440 Canberra, ACT, 2601  
Phone: (02) 6295 2837  
Email: fahs@history.org.au  
www.history.org.au

*Because history matters*

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Hon Dan Tehan MP,  
Minister for Education,  
Parliament House,  
Canberra, ACT, 2600

1 July 2020

Dear Minister

### **PENALISING THE STUDY OF HISTORY**

The Federation of Australian Historical Societies wishes to express profound concern about the proposed university fee structure that penalises the study of the Humanities, and notably of the enriching study of History.

FAHS is the umbrella body for Australia's community history and heritage associations which number over 1000 and have approximately 100,000 members. Our volunteer members are deeply involved in working towards the best preservation and presentation of Australian History and cultural heritage. They undertake very large volume of historical research and collection in hard (documentary, movable objects and built/sites) and digital forms, they operate many hundreds of small cultural heritage collections, exhibitions and museums, and they transmit our history and heritage in publications, websites and various other formats. FAHS was a founding member of GLAM Peak.

Our members are amazed and puzzled by the announced policy of your government, one result of which will be to discourage students from studying History. Among many repercussions this will threaten the future supply of History teachers who are necessary for this mandated component of the National History Curriculum.

The National Curriculum states:

History is a disciplined process of inquiry into the past that develops students' curiosity and imagination. Awareness of history is an essential characteristic of any society, and historical knowledge is fundamental to understanding ourselves and others.

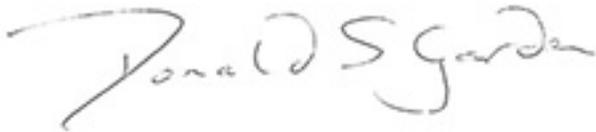
We are sure that you will be aware that History is a fundamental part of any culture, and that knowledge and understanding of the past by its citizens is in the essence of nationhood and democracy. The study of History, warts and all, is critical in understanding Australian national identity and values. The Liberal and National parties have long been known for their support of nationalism and their promotion of pride in Australian nationhood, so our puzzlement at this proposed policy is compounded.

A knowledge of History is also central to reconciliation - knowing and acknowledging the past allows us to move forward.

You will also be well aware of the educational and intellectual benefits of studying the Humanities, as we believe that you did yourself, and that to limit access to these studies will restrict the enrichment of our citizens both privately and in the workplace. Australia should be striving to be a clever and thoughtful country, not one with a narrow and functional attitude to education that limits intellectual exploration and expansion.

Indeed, given the value that the study of the Humanities brings to professional and corporate leadership, FAHS strongly advocates the inclusion of a cornerstone course in Australian culture and History in all undergraduate degree pathways at Australian universities.

FAHS hopes that you will reconsider this policy before it damages our education system and the capacity of our citizens to understand their past through the formal study of History and the wider Humanities.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Donald S Garden". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Associate Professor Don Garden OAM FFAHS FRHSV  
President  
[d.garden@unimelb.edu.au](mailto:d.garden@unimelb.edu.au) 0417169018