

TO: Future Melbourne Committee, City of Melbourne
RE: Agenda item 7.3 on 21 July 2020 (Notice of Motion, Cr Watts) –
Arts and Humanities Higher Education funding
FROM: Margaret Birtley AM, Executive Officer, History Council of Victoria
DATE: 20 July 2020

The History Council of Victoria is the peak body for history in Victoria. Our office is located at History House in Melbourne. Our membership includes organisations that are major employers of humanities, arts and social sciences graduates, including archaeologists, archivists, historians, journalists, librarians, museum workers, planners and professional administrators. We believe that understanding and promoting history are important to inspire people's engagement with the past, their identity and the world today. We also believe that the study of history is essential for a progressive society and community wellbeing in Victoria.

We are therefore pleased to support the Motion put to the Future Melbourne Committee by Cr Watts, that the Council of the City of Melbourne object strongly to the Commonwealth Government's proposal to change the funding model and the number of available places for university students in the Humanities, Arts and Social Sciences.

Our Chair, Emeritus Professor Peter McPhee AM, has already written to the Minister for Education, the Hon. Dan Tehan, to convey our own concern about his proposal. The letter, [summarised on our website](#), advised the Minister that Australia needs more Humanities and Social Science graduates, not less, and urged the Minister to rethink his punitive funding proposal.

Professor McPhee has also written, on behalf of the History Council of Victoria, an opinion piece: [A Humanities education: what's the point?](#) We have forwarded that article to the cross-bench Senators and to the Shadow Minister for Education and Training.

We liaise closely with the other three Australian History Councils, in New South Wales, South Australia and Western Australia. In 2019 we produced a joint Statement about the [Value of History](#) that has been widely endorsed. The Statement is summarised by the following sentence:

History shapes our identities, engages us as citizens, creates inclusive communities, is part of our economic well-being, teaches us to think critically and creatively, inspires leaders and is the foundation of our future generations.

The study of the past and the telling of its stories are critical to our sense of belonging, to our communities and to our shared future. It is therefore essential that any changes to the funding model for university places not prevent, discourage or divert students from engaging with the Humanities, Arts and Social Sciences.

If you require more information about this submission, please contact us using the details in our letterhead.