

2050 Alliance convenes higher education community for roadmap to fairer student fees

3 June 2026

The 2050 Alliance has today brought together members of the higher education community including university leaders, student representatives and higher education policy experts to develop a roadmap to fairer student fees.

Australia's current university fee structure, the Job-Ready Graduates (JRG) package, was introduced in 2021 and has resulted in students paying \$368 million more for their education (2024 data) than they would have under the previous funding system. At the same time, universities received \$813 million less to teach and support students, due to significant reductions in government funding under the policy.

Arts degrees are now costing students more than \$50,000 and dual-degrees are close to \$100,000, which is turning students away from university.

Today's meeting aims to set out a roadmap to a fairer system of university fees for Australian students.

Distinguished Professor George Williams AO, Chair of the 2050 Alliance and Vice-Chancellor of Western Sydney University, said the current fee structure is denying students opportunities that were available to their parents and grandparents.

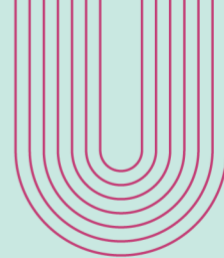
"Access to higher education is one of the greatest enablers of social mobility in our society," he said. "As it stands, university degrees are increasingly becoming accessible only to those who have access to the bank of mum and dad. This is about fairness but also about maximising the talents of all Australians to drive productivity and a better standard of living for the future."

"JRG is one of the top five policy failures this century, and it is young people who are suffering. It must be reformed as an urgent priority and the 2050 Alliance is proud to be leading the discussion."

2050 Alliance CEO Paul Harris said that reforming university fees is necessary to meet the Australian Government's target of 80% tertiary education attainment by 2050, by lifting participation by under-represented students.

"The current fee structure is pushing students away from university and creating a two-track education system," he said. "Our modelling shows that commencements by students from low socioeconomic backgrounds have declined by nearly 10% since the introduction of JRG, but this is 20% for low-SES students in courses with the highest fees, including law, commerce and humanities.

"Without urgent reform, it will become too late to achieve our 2050 targets."



CONTACT

Bethany Keats, 2050 Alliance – 0481 092 635

[Photos available here.](#)

ABOUT THE 2050 ALLIANCE

The 2050 Alliance is a new university group focused on students, communities and the future. Across Australia, our member universities have more than 65 campuses in inner city, suburban and regional areas, serving diverse communities and teaching over 285,000 students. We are expanding opportunity: increasing participation and productivity to benefit all Australians.

