

Consultation on the Universities Accord Bill

19 May 2026

On 08 May 2026, targeted consultation on the Universities Accord (Opening the Doors of Opportunity) Bill began. This Bill will implement two changes to university funding by implementing a Managed Growth Funding system and Needs-Based Funding. These are recommendations of the Universities Accord (the Accord), delivered in 2023, and follow the establishment of the Australian Tertiary Education Commission (ATEC) in 2026, which will allocate funding and implement these changes.

These funding changes are intended to provide greater access to university for students from disadvantaged backgrounds, including those from the regions and Indigenous students, through increased funding. They will also provide greater certainty to universities on the number of Commonwealth Supported Places they can deliver each year. The Accord projects that 80% of workers will need a university degree or TAFE qualification by 2050.

Managed Growth Funding System

The Accord outlined the need for a Managed Growth funding system to support growth in university enrolments to increase the number of skilled graduates within the workforce. Additional oversight by ATEC on the University funding model is intended to ensure that this need for skilled workers can be met without compromising on the quality of tertiary education through unplanned, unmanaged or under-funded growth.

The proposed changes in the bill would ensure that students who meet admission requirements for higher education have access to a Commonwealth Supported Place. The Government expects to fund an additional 200,000 commencing students at university over the next decade. This would end the current practice of universities exceeding their enrolment caps by offering partial funding to students.

The Accord suggested that universities should maintain the freedom to make choices regarding their enrolments and finances within the framework established by the legislation and monitored by ATEC. The Accord also suggested that universities should

remain accountable for admitting students who have the skills to study each course so that admission standards do not decline.

Needs-Based Funding

The Bill also includes provisions for Needs-Based Funding to increase enrolment of students from poor families, regions and the bush, and Indigenous students. Universities will receive more funding if they have more students that meet the criteria or are located on regional or remote campuses. This additional funding recognises both the inequity that challenge these students and the increased cost which regional universities face. It is expected to support approximately 140,000 students from disadvantaged backgrounds and 150,000 students at regional and remote campuses this year.

These proposed changes implement the recommendations of the Accord, which suggested that legislation, overseen by ATEC, should provide per-student funding for under-represented students, increase funding for regional campuses, and include a completion bonus for universities who meet target completion rates for disadvantaged students. The Accord also recommended that this model, overseen by ATEC, should significantly increase the number of Commonwealth supported places in regional medical schools, and expand the Regional Study Hubs program.

The Accord recognised the decreased participation of these disadvantaged students within higher education and suggested changes to improve not only enrolment, but also participation, retention, and completion. As such, this extra funding can be used to provide additional academic and financial support for eligible students to assist in addressing the additional roadblocks that they face.

The media release for the consultation can be accessed [here](#).

The Final Report on the Australian Universities Accord can be accessed [here](#).

Further Information

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