

Private Higher Education Interest Group

Submission to the Commission of Inquiry in to Higher Education and
Training on the Feasibility of Fee Free Education

In summary

- Very conscious of the extensive work already done and the time for the Commission drawing to a close so have limited our input to matters of principle and support.
- PHEIG is of the opinion that more support should be available from the state for more people to attend public higher education and that for some fees are unaffordable at a level that makes fee free education a necessity.
- PHEIG does not support the position that public higher education should be free for all students and believes that those that can afford to pay for higher education should do so.

Specifically

- Missing middle is too large and getting bigger – need to be a higher cut off for eligibility for support from NSFAS or any other funding – the ceiling needs to be moving annually at least in line with CPIX.
- Gap funding for the missing middle may be an idea worth exploring to create tiered funding but will only be effective if the level at which NSFAS eligibility stops is raised
- Full fee free education for all advantages the wealthy – we are of the opinion that those that can afford to pay should pay.
- Efficiencies are needed (throughput, graduation and expenditure) to ensure that support money is well used and can quickly be returned to the system to support others.

Specifically

- Those who benefit from fee free education should be required to pay at least some of it back so that the money can be recycled.
- Institutions cannot bear the burden on a further reducing income stream from fees without additional support from other sources.
- Some institutions carry a disproportionate burden of supported students already and this must not be exacerbated – in terms of institutional impact through any system now implemented.