

26 MAY 2025 – MEDIA STATEMENT

“Students are out-of-the-loop, frustrated, and anxious about implications”: Statement from the TUSA Student Council on the Proposed Changes to the College of Arts, Law and Education

On 15 May 2025, the University of Tasmania released a Change Proposal (The Proposal) regarding the College of Arts, Law and Education (CALE), outlining major change to course delivery in the schools of Humanities, Social Sciences, and Creative Arts and Media.

The Tasmanian University Student Association (TUSA) recognises that changes to the current model are indeed required to improve staff and student experience.

“Sure, change needs to happen,” Mx Jack Oates Pryor, the President of the TUSA, stated, “but it shouldn’t be at the expense of student experience on the ground”.

TUSA and the Student Council are not opposed to change. Mx Oates Pryor said that TUSA support thoughtful transformation that strengthens the student experience and educational outcomes, fosters equity, and responds to student needs. “Our focus is ensuring that students are not only informed but actively involved in shaping this transition”, they said. TUSA maintains that students must remain at the heart of any decisions that affect their learning, identity, and future, and be meaningfully engaged in co-design of any change.

TUSA is pleased that the University is attempting to take proactive steps in CALE to safeguard learning quality and wellbeing for both staff and students. However, “financial stability cannot come at the cost of further reductions in a quality educational experience, student support, or sustainable academic workloads”, Mx Oates Pryor said. They recognise the University’s challenging financial situation, context and constraints at present and that maintaining high-quality teaching and student support requires resourcing, however.

TUSA sees that staff wellbeing equates to student wellbeing and stands in solidarity with the NTEU – Tasmania Branch, in their opposition to forced staff

redundancies. “To cut staff and PhD supervisors from academic units who are already overworked to breaking point is a risk for both current and future students. That’s when cuts deepen the academic experience crisis to the point of collapse”, said Mx Oates Pryor. Ensuring these disciplines are sufficiently resourced and supported will be critical during and after any transitions. Furthermore, they added, “despite the University’s ‘teach-out’ obligations to all current students studying proposed courses to be cut, cutting any courses will not only affect future students but also the future of our academic staff and much of Tasmania’s workforce”.

TUSA recognises the University’s efforts to engage students so far in this consultation but encourages the University to provide further flexible and accessible consultation options that realistically reflect the realities of student workloads and timelines for those affected by any proposals. “I know how packed the first half of this year has been for the University in the amount of systemic change going on behind the scenes”, Mx Oates Pryor noted, “but it is disappointing that this Proposal is left until Week 11, arguably the busiest time of semester for students and staff affected”.

Mx Oates Pryor went on to say, “UTAS has previously committed to a ‘Students as Partners’ engagement model. It encourages substantive ‘co-design’ to ensure changes serve the student body in meaningful and equitable ways. I encourage the University to meaningfully implement this consultation’s feedback, not merely collect it, and to work with students towards change that truly supports learning, equity, and belonging”.

Since the Proposal was announced, there has been significant critique of it online from various media articles and a burgeoning student-run social media page on Instagram, ‘Save UTAS Arts’. Concerns include the perceived proliferation of a cultural undervaluing of languages, diluted disciplinary integrity and belonging, and staffing cuts.

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