

# Liberalising Learning

Liberalising Learning

Andrew Norton, Director of Liberalising Learning



Andrew Norton

Liberalising Learning

**L**IBERALISING LEARNING is the newest of the CIS research programmes, launched in February 2000. Headed by Andrew Norton, former higher education adviser to Dr David Kemp, *Liberalising Learning* aims at informing the public of the reasons for the poor performance of Australia's universities, and suggesting proposals for change. It has generated considerable controversy, with articles on the socialist way in which universities are run and the policy failure of the Australian Vice-Chancellors' Committee (AVCC) generating heated letters to the press as well as a small student demonstration against the programme's director, Andrew Norton.

This controversy is likely to continue with a forthcoming *Issue Analysis* paper on why universities are producing too many graduates in the humanities and social sciences. Since the 1970s, graduates in these fields have been doing poorly in the labour market, with the proportion who are in the labour market but unemployed or underemployed four months after graduation exceeding 30% for the last decade. Despite this, universities have continued to increase the number of students commencing degrees in these areas, with the annual number rising by nearly 60% since 1989. The *Issue Analysis* paper will argue that creating markets in higher education is the most effective way of reducing this misinvestment in human capital.

There will also be further publication on the strange nature of interest groups in higher education, which act against the financial interests of their members. The AVCC, for instance, continues to oppose deregulation, even though this is the only plausible policy that can save its members from the severe financial constraints they face. The major staff union, the National Tertiary Education Union, also opposes deregulation, even though that is the only way of paying wage increases without causing redundancies. The National Union of Students' opposition to deregulation means that almost all Australian undergraduate students are forbidden from investing more in their education, even though for most this will be their major income-producing asset. Even the Business Higher Education Roundtable has been captured by the universities, and has therefore made little contribution to dealing with the structural problems of higher education.

Other issues to be considered in *Liberalising Learning* publications include the abolition of student quotas, ending the discrimination against private higher education providers, university admissions, and the income distribution impact of university subsidies.

For more information on *Liberalising Learning*, please contact the Centre  
 ph: (+61) (2) 9438 4377  
 fax: (+61) (2) 9439 7310  
 email: anorton@cis.org.au

DEMONSTRATE!

**Students demand:**  
 Stop selling off student housing; provide affordable accommodation now  
 Andrew Norton off campus; stop Kemp's draconian agenda for education  
 Increase wages and conditions for staff  
 Free, public education now; Stop Melbourne Uni Private!



**RALLY**  
 3rd April  
 Nth Court @ 3pm

ON APRIL 3RD THE UNIVERSITY COUNCIL MEETS TO REVIEW THE REPORT OF HOLDINGS AND SET NEW HOUSING TARGETS. TO THE AT LEAST ONE THOUSAND STUDENTS HAVE BEEN "POLITELY" ASKED TO VACATE THEIR HOMES" BECAUSE THE UNIVERSITY WANTS TO SELL THEM OFF TO MAKE MONEY, AS SET BY INTERNATIONAL BANKERS WHO HAVE PROFITED FOR YEARS STUDENTS.  
 University Council is the highest governing body within the university. It is responsible for all the university's major decisions, including the representation of government interests in education. It is made up of the Vice-Chancellor, the current Vice-Chancellor, the Education Minister, David Kemp and a bunch of representatives from the national and international corporations like BHP, South Ltd and others. There are only 3 student representatives on the Council.  
**RECENT COUNCIL DECISIONS:**  
 1997 - Introduction of full tuition fees for international students  
 1998 - Increased tuition to go along with other private Melbourne Uni Private  
 1999 - Funding of Melbourne Uni Council to sell off 100,000 sqm  
 2000 - What is next?