Engineers Australia
Media Release

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Engineers Australia statement:
University fee reform a recipe for inequality

"While the Commonwealth Government's announced changes for university fees may motivate more students to choose engineering, there may be unintended consequences that require careful management to ensure it does not lead to increased inequality and a harmful reduction in the diversity of skills necessary for a modern workforce.

Successfully meeting societal challenges of sustainability, economic growth and improved quality of life through innovation requires engineers to work in cross-disciplinary teams of human behaviouralists, economists, lawyers, communication specialists and more.

The future of engineering requires a diversity of students that have a breadth of knowledge that extends beyond the technical. This new policy will make education more expensive for the many engineering students who choose to do a double degree.

An increase in university fees risks increasing structural inequality for women and people from low socioeconomic status (SES) backgrounds who choose to study humanities, law and other courses that will now leave them in even more debt.

Engineers Australia believes a more effective mechanism to encourage young people to choose degrees in high-demand fields is to challenge outdated perceptions of STEM, both in the classroom and at home. More funding should be allocated to programs and services that highlight the design, innovation and future-shaping potential of these roles.

A significant barrier to more people choosing to study engineering is the low number of young people studying essential preparatory subjects for engineering, such as maths and physics. This is where government attention and funding should be applied."

- Engineers Australia CEO Dr Bronwyn Evans

Dr Evans is available for further comment

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