



## **AHA Statement on Proposed Cuts to History at the Australian Catholic University**

The AHA expresses its dismay at the cuts and redundancies that have been earmarked for the History discipline, and the humanities and social sciences more broadly, at the Australian Catholic University (ACU). The proposal includes the discontinuation of 19 positions in History, amounting to all but 4 of ACU's academic appointments in our discipline across various Faculties. These are to be replaced with just 10 positions. The proposal also disestablishes, among other centres, the Institute for Humanities and Social Sciences (IHSS) and the world-leading Medieval and Early Modern Studies (MEMS) program.

Some of Australia's leading historians, whose track records in research, teaching and community engagement are second to none, stand to lose their careers. Many were only recently recruited, leaving positions in other universities to help develop the humanities at the ACU where they were told their expertise would be valued. Others under threat have given years of exemplary service in teaching, research and community engagement, establishing the ACU as a leading centre for the study of History in this country. Any history job losses would not only be devastating to the individuals involved but also a great loss to ACU students, and to the wider history community, both here in Australia and around the world.

The majority of ACU's historians will be invited to compete with one another for a reduced number of positions. We are unable to see how interdisciplinarity or accessibility – the reputed aims of this process, according to ACU management – can possibly be enhanced by the curtailing of employment contracts and the dismantling of interdisciplinary research institutes. These cuts are deeply harmful to Australians' capacity to 'understand the world we live in' and 'create the best possible future', the goals of ACU's National School of Arts and Humanities. This ill-advised decision comes at a time when greater historical understanding is urgently required in our civic life.

Many ACU historians are members of the AHA. Earlier this year, the ACU hosted in Melbourne the AHA's 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary conference, one of the most successful in the organisation's history. ACU historians also currently edit *History Australia*, the AHA's journal. These are only two examples of the many ways that ACU historians combine world-leading research and education with exemplary professional service.

The AHA expresses its solidarity with all scholars at the ACU, and implores the university to reverse its decision, which can only be interpreted as an attack on the Australian historical profession, and the humanities, as a whole.

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