



22nd May 2007

Students support HECS extension to cover student organisation fees

The National Union of Students today supported the idea of extending government loans to student organisation fees.

The move would see the preservation of effective student representation, which has been the most affected by the government's voluntary student unionism (VSU) legislation.

The National Union of Students called on the government and opposition to introduce a system to adequately resource student representative bodies, which ensure that students have access to strong independent appeal and complaint review processes.

The National Union of Students said that the weakening of student representation by VSU had the potential to damage Australia's fourth largest export (\$10bn a year), with many international students finding that support services and complaint review processes were inadequate when they arrived.

Mr Michael Nguyen, President of the National Union of Students said, *"The old system of compulsory student unionism was not the best system, given the current levels of student income support."*

"A move towards providing any assistance for the cost of student organisation fees is supported by students."

"The current level of student income support is so inadequate, access to a HECS loan scheme for student organisation fees would be welcomed by students."

"The important aspects of universal student unionism which need to be preserved are the provision of welfare support services and effective independent student representation."

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"The breakdown of student representation post-VSU has lead to a deterioration in quality and complaint review processes for students."

"Due to the reduced capacity of many student representative bodies, students are increasingly finding it difficult to negotiate University bureaucracies when they encounter problems in a post-VSU environment."

"International students in particular have found that their complaints were not handled in a timely and efficient manner post-VSU. The lack of transparent and accountable complaint review processes has the potential to damage the international student market, which is worth \$10bn a year to the economy."

"The recent example of the fiasco at Central Queensland University which led to headlines in Indian media should serve as a warning for those Universities without strong student representative bodies to give effect and meaning to the ESOS framework."

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