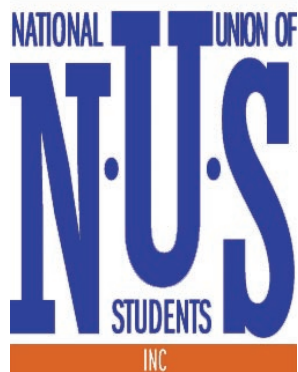


5th June 2007



Students say no to Sandstone Surcharge

The National Union of Students today welcomed in-principle the recommendations from the group of eight. The National Union of Students supported the recommendation that the government should fund students at the cost of course delivery, which is to be determined by an independent body. The National Union of Students supported the recommendations surrounding a review of student income support.

The National Union of Students is concerned however about the ability for institutions to charge an additional 25% on top of the course cost, presumably as a method of differentiation and to promote diversity. This “sandstone surcharge” will inevitably lead to an unwarranted revenue stream for elite Universities.

The National Union of Students is also concerned about the offering of the proposed Tertiary Education Loans Scheme, which should not be offered to any students in order for them to by-pass the scholarship scheme and receive a loan from the Government to “Queue-jump.”

The final concern from the National Union of Students is in relation to the safeguards or measures, which will be put in place to ensure the continued provision of higher education and skills to communities in rural and regional areas, as well as outer metropolitan areas such as western Sydney.

Mr Michael Nguyen, National President of the National Union of Students said, “It seems that the key issue which the Group of Eight want addressed is the level of commonwealth contribution, which everyone acknowledges doesn’t match the cost of course delivery, so it makes sense for the sector to simply advocate the abolishing of full-fee entry places and the increasing of funding from the government to the level which it actually costs to deliver a course.”

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“The reframing of the policy architecture seems to open up new issues in relation to equity, access to universities for rural and regional communities unnecessarily, when the solutions to the problems are a simple case of increased funding from the government,” Mr Nguyen said.

Mr Nguyen went on to say, “The suggestion that the government should reform the demand side of the higher education market doesn’t seem to hold once the details of the Group of Eight proposal “seizing the opportunities” are scrutinized.”

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“The government will still have a heavy hand on supply if proper measures are put in place to encourage both skill shortage areas and access for regional and outer-metropolitan communities, and the government must retain a heavy hand on supply to ensure that public institutions operate in the public interest,” said Mr Nguyen.

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