

Students grade the parties

The National Union of Students has released its federal election report card grading the major parties on 10 key issues.

The issues broadly cover the areas of fees, ancillary costs of education, childcare, climate change and workplace relations for young people.

National president Michael Nguyen said the report card is

ELECTION 2007 What's in it for Students?

Students have given the major parties a grade for their responses to issues important to students.	Liberal Party	Australian Labor	The Democrats	The Greens
Full Fee Degrees:	F	A	A	A
HECS-HELP Debt:	F	C	A	A
Youth Allowance-Age of Independence	F	B	A	A
Youth Allowance-Income Bank	F	A	A	A
Student Organisations:	F	C	A	A
Textbook subsidy:	F	B	A	A
Childcare:	F	B	A	A
Climate Change:	C	B	A	A
Workplace Relations:	F	B	A	A
Ability to form government and fully implement responses to issues:	A	A	F	F

Policies were collected and graded as at 31st August 2007

designed to give the community an idea of where the major parties currently stand on issues that students identified as important.

"We are encouraging everyone to keep a close eye on changes to these policy positions during the campaign and leading up to the day of the election," he said.

"The issues were chosen by students as issues that they considered to be of importance to them. The major parties were graded against an ideal response that students developed based on access, equity, fairness and sustainability."

"It's clear from the report card that the Coalition has scored badly on the issues that matter to young people and that it needs to be changing some of its vision for the future if it is going to win the vote of students and young people."

"The ALP has presented a clear alternative vision for the future for young people but the ALP's avoidance of identifying action points before the election campaign on some issues brings down the

ALP's grade slightly."

"The Democrats and The Greens scored particularly well for their consistent support of student issues, their inability to form government however raises an entire new debate for students about how they will vote."

Last week the Democrats launched their higher education policy earning a rating upgrade to A+ from the NUS.

Elect a scandal

The appearance of a penis has already occurred in the national election, courtesy of Family First candidate Andrew Quah. But uncovered holier than thouness is common enough in politics. Last month a state pollie in the US came to grief when he was invited to give a lecture to local students on how a bill becomes a law. State Rep. Matthew Barrett popped his data memory stick into the computer and an image of a topless woman appeared instead of the graphics presentation he had planned. "I have no idea where these came from," he said.

Political soapbox

As campaigning moves online, Australian voters can 'friend' political leaders on Facebook and MySpace, but in 1901 Edmund Barton and George Reid used the humble soapbox to appeal to the Australian public. So has anything changed?

A new website called Soapbox has been developed by the University of Melbourne's Dr Sally Young.

"The Soapbox website is an online archive that means anyone can access election materials from 1901 to now – including photographs, texts of speeches, transcripts of debates and political ads – and see for themselves the growth and development of Australian politics."

Soapbox is a unique Australian political archive, bringing together key historical documents and audio-visual material, and making

them available to students, researchers, journalists and the general public.

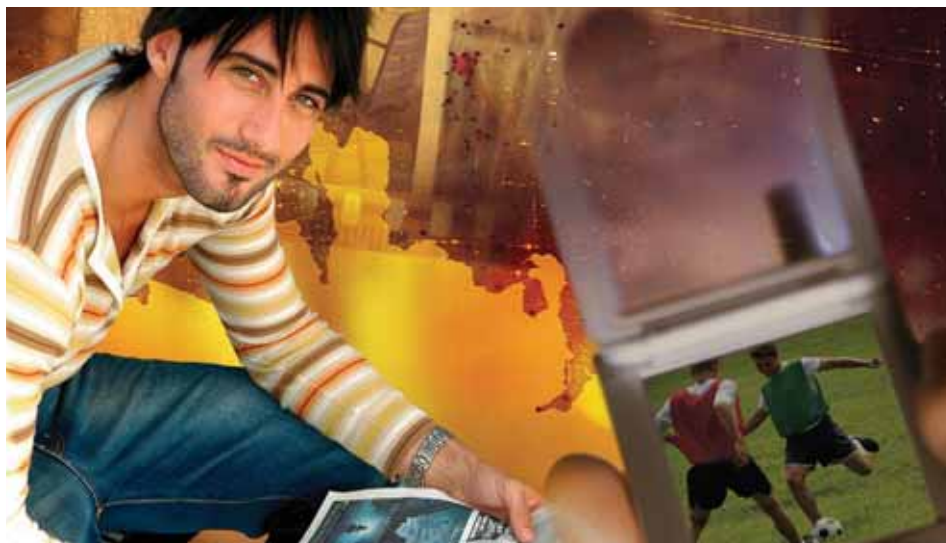
While election campaigns focus on the short-term – the hectic three to six weeks of shaking hands, slinging mud and kissing babies – Soapbox allows electors to see elections as a continuum; to look back over time to see what the parties and their leaders have said (and promised) in the past.

"In the lead up to the 2007 election there is no better time to take a trip through the history of Australian federal election campaigns," Young says.

"Regardless of how you vote in this election, see for yourself whether John Howard and Kevin Rudd employ the same tactics as their predecessors and check how the promises and rhetoric (has) changed."

Visit soapbox.unimelb.edu.au/

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