

Action call on exploitation

“Create more affordable housing and transport concession cards”

The National Union of Students (NUS) has called for the State Government’s new international student taskforce to tackle exploitation of overseas students in the workforce, tenancy and education.

On the back of a 27,000 increase of international students in Victoria, rising to 133,000, the Government is putting together a crack team to combat concerns of exploitation of overseas students.

The national NUS president Angus McFarland told *Utimes* that the taskforce should act against exploitation of international students, and expected the taskforce would initially focus on the workforce, due to the government’s ability to

control occupational health and safety.

McFarland urged the Taskforce to make recommendations to the Federal Government, particularly in the area of international student visas.

During semester, students are restricted to working only 20 hours per week. With the rising costs of living, that is barely enough to make ends meet, with many students seeking illegal cash in hand jobs often fraught with unsatisfactory conditions, McFarland said.

Victorian state branch president of the NUS, Sarah Cole, said, “the Federal Government has allowed universities to increase international student fees massively over the years.”

She said public funding for universities had dipped to a point “where universities are now reliant on international student fees as a funding source. Universities function as businesses, focused on enrolling more international students at higher prices.”

Cole said the taskforce should seek meaningful involvement from international students and their representative organisations.

“In terms of end results, I hope the taskforce comes out with a set of recommendations that the State Government can act on right away in terms of protecting

international students from exploitation by employers or accommodation providers (for instance) while they are here.”

She said if the State Government really wanted to treat the international students fairly, they should be looking to create more affordable housing and Victorian transport concession cards available to these students.

Cole said she also hoped “the taskforce will make some strong recommendations to the Federal Government on problems faced by international students on university campuses (as) international students are currently treated as cash cows by our education system.”

State Government Skills and Workforce Participation Minister Jacinta Allan, said the taskforce, “will examine key issues such as access to information, coordination of services, safety and accommodation.”

She said there was a “need to ensure international students are adequately supported whilst studying here and return to their country of origin with fond memories and maintain strong links with Victoria and Australia.”

Anton Sirianni

Post grad salaries rise

New Australian postgraduates are entering their first full-time work on salaries in excess of \$60,000, according to a survey by Graduate Careers Australia (GCA).

And on average, graduates with a coursework master’s award are earning \$4000 more than those with a research master’s or a PhD.

The survey also shows that 89.5 per cent of postgraduates have found a full-time position within four months of graduating.

The 2007 Australian Graduate Survey collated over 117,000 responses from more than 205,000 recent graduates.

The survey, focusing on the three main award levels (postgraduate diplomas and certificate, master’s degrees by coursework and research and PhDs), found that the median salaries for all full-time employed postgraduates had increased by up to \$3300 from 2006 figures.

GCA research manager, Bruce Guthrie, says that graduates with a coursework master’s are often “coming away with more work experience” than their research counterparts, something that appeals to potential employers.

GCA executive director Cindy Tilbrook says, “As the number of bachelor degree graduates in Australia grows, some are undertaking postgraduate study in order to fine-tune their initial qualification”, and that most “are seeking to establish a competitive edge in their segment of the labour market.”

The median salaries for full-time employed postgraduates:

Postgraduate diploma or certificate graduates – \$57,000.

Graduates with coursework master’s awards – \$68,000.

Graduates with a research master’s or PhD – \$64,000.

Anton Sirianni



Cocktail mix-off

RMIT students can enter original cocktails for a chance to be crowned bartender of the year. The finalists go into the “mix-off” at Red Love in Swanston Street on October 16 – an event open to the public.

More info at www.bartenderoftheyear.com.au

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